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Disclaimer

[image]

Hello everyone, this is just a short authors note.

This is a very personal project that took almost the entire year to finish (2023) as I finally dedicated my free time to rewriting my first story ever. It was made in 2020 during quarantien where my English writing skills were 3 meters under the earth and me myself was a little more childish (I literally was 13 holy moly).

But looking back at my work back then, I never felt proud leaving it alone like this, especially since I still loved the concept behind the idea itself, the execution was just terrible! So, as said I dedicated my time to rework the first major plotline (To like chapter 23 in the OG). Maybe I'll do a continuation of that someday, but I also have other stories to work one. Don't pressure me please. Thank you
If you cannot find the original, I have take it down for good.
-believe me, you missed NOTHING.

So, to get to the disclaimer, this story does include:
-harrasment
-abuse
-isolation
-manipulation
-graphic depictions
-the gay agender (You have picked a Netherlands x Indonesia story for a reason)
-tiny bit of torture even

There are also extra chapters to give a litte more background to the story playing in present time, but I'm sure you can figure it out yourself. Have fun reading :)

-Swappie/Alex, the Author
(Oh yeah that is my version of Netherlands in this story, he is precious)

1| Savoured Evening

[image]

I regain consciousness as pain is flooding my head- no, my whole body. Why does everything hurt as hell? No... more importantly, what happened? And where am I?! As I ask these questions to myself, all of the sudden, flashbacks start running through my head, making me remember what exactly happened. The physical pain numbs... and my heart cracks. Quite literally.
Damn second life.
Goddamn fight.
Really, I just want to cry and hide away at this point. What else is left to do anyways? I sigh heavily, already losing my will to live again. I don't care where I am, not anymore. The injuries from the fight and the things I lost is lasting a strong impact as I remember what lead up to this point in my life, it sucks every single bit of energy out of my body. I can't even find the will to open my eyes. Truly ***pathetic****. I'm rambling again. Can't I just forget everything? Would probably the best option to erase the pain, mentally. Sadly, I do not possess the ability to do that. I was able to wish my life back- stronger than ever, but I pay the price I believe. And now I'm just laying here... and I have no idea for how long I just might.*

After what feels like forever, I start to relax. Seems like my body is so drained that it put itself into resting modus to replenish energy. I still don't want to use the little energy remaining on opening my eyes, also everything STILL HURTS- yet, I feel calmer. That's a start. Blind and increasingly bored at time passing, I sharpen my other senses on the noises around me and things touching my body, trying to recognize the outside as best as possible. The ground feels rather soft underneath me. Soft soil, also dry soil. Sand, maybe? But hold on, the ground is soft?? Well, that is certainly weird. I only remember standing on hard ground before impulsively passing out, it also feels like grass is growing on it. Long grass. It tickles a bit and smells fresh and sort of does help to relax me further. Then a breeze passes by, softly patting me, stroking through my hair. I'm outside? Wasn't I just in... the Void? In pure nothingness that is unnerving to all? I sigh, inhaling the air deep into my lungs. For

how long have I been here? Where is here? Which world?
I shift around a bit, making myself a little more comfortable, accepting my fate to replenish energy for a while. Positively, the climate seems to be warm, so yea I most definitely could be in a worse situation. It's not hot, if I had to take a guess based on the climate in my original home, I'd say it's late summer, August or early September maybe. Or it's just middle summer with a surprisingly cold evening. Or late spring, May or June.
Another breeze strokes of the area and I smell a tint of saltiness. Am I close to the sea?
This day continues to surprise me further and further. My emotions stir up again, I have never been well with those.
I try to calm myself down. Calm down, there will be an answer to everything. She'll be okay. She always is. She will find you and we'll continue travelling soon.

I yawn, my head shutting down.
If I had to jump to conclusions at my current state, I probably got teleported here, that would make the most sense. The situation in the void was quite heated, so she probably teleported me. Yeah, I'll stick with that explanation for now. And now I'll have to wait... I can't jump between universes or timelines. I'll think later about what to do next. I'm sure it'll be alright.

With that, I pass out once more.
.

Indonesia's POV (Point of View)

I stretch, walking out the front door with a jacket and some pants fit for summer. The sun shines bright and the sky is already turning into a golden, orange color. There are no clouds and the night will be absolutely beautiful. So, yeah! It's a really nice day, I gotta say. I wait for my friends to finally join me, as we have big plans this evening. Am I getting impatient!
'Then get them!' my brain scoffs at me. Introducing: My intrusive thoughts! They sort of keep talk to me. Not sure if that is normal, but I've gotten used to it.
'Don't ignore me, I hear you'

"Yeah, yeah, shut up." I don't like the voice; it always bothers me. I sigh and spin around. Where was I? Right. Where the hell are they? It's so nice outside and I can't stay inside any longer! Especially, since it was too hot around noon to go outside or do anything basically, so we spend the day inside our house. Quite boring, I have too much energy leftover. My friends finally step out the door to join me, I live with Philippines and Malaysia in the same house. Mal carries a Volleyball, Phil a bag with towels and swim wear. Then we start walking. Sure, the sun is already going down, but since it's still very warm outside, we (and some other countries) decided to go to the beach and enjoy the evening there. Poland and Germany wanted to bring drink -I really hope Poland is managing to keep Germs from bringing beer only- and others like Japan, Italy and America, the USA to be exact, wanted to bring food and music as well. Oh, this will be the best evening EVER! Japan is a really sweet person and I like her so much! Ame is quite helpful, but also weird and Germs is pretty handsome, but strict, like ah Allah! Everyone is being so chill and cool with me all the time. I am just, popular~
'And you're just getting ahead of yourself'
"You ARE my head!"
'Touché.'
There is a town near the sea build for us countries. Countries only. We got isolated from normal 'humans' after World War 2, for 'safety'-reasons and not being used as 'weapons' in further wars and discussions. And if I'm honest, whenever I watch the news- I am pretty happy that things are that way. Anyways.

Not long after walking, we soon arrive at the beach. It's long and white with crystal clear water, fish everywhere and beautifully formed waves. The view is amazing, breathtaking even. A tint of salt is carried on land with a soft wind, the sky is yellow, orange, and red, the sun soon to be touching the water at the skyline as the sweeping of the sea is heard in the background. Truly, a *perfect* evening. AWESOME. Life has been so much better since I have resigned from politics and the stress of carrying an entire country on my shoulders with everything in it. The world is divided by this, either thinking this is good for us, or that we just consume their taxes. I agree on both. Yet, this is not the time to dwell in self-doubt! I start walking faster, as said I was bored inside all day,

personally I need some action, I am adventurous by nature. Malay is almost running after me as Phil is heard breathing.
"Quit running! We have all time of the world!" he yells as he falls behind, me and Mal catching up to a group also walking to the agreed spot by some dunes. We reach them and we greet. Multiple heads turn around, smiling, waving and greeting back, welcoming us. What a nice community we have. Now included in the group I pass Belgium and her brother Luxembourg. Belgium seems a little pressed as she smiles with the others and Lux is straight up mentally not present. I make a note to myself to investigate that later. This evening is just too perfect, I'm not going to ruin that for me just yet with some heavy drama! Looking in the distance, I spot people already waiting at the dunes, waving and shouting excited, getting me more excited as well. We reach them, some hug as they greet each other, but my attention is already on the water. Turning around, Phil is still around 200 m behind us, seeming exhausted. He really ought to do more work out I swear to God.
"Hurry up!" I yell, pointing my finger at my wrist as if I had a clock. Phil doesn't get any faster though and we all just wait.
"Idiotic."
'And now you're just a dick. You know he can't run properly.'
"I'm not a dick! Never was!"
Poland already cracks open a soda and hands it to Phil as he finally arrives, trying to cheer him up a little. Wasting no more time I snatch the soda.
"He- " Phil gasps and I grin evil.
"That is for you being so slow!" I laugh and drink it. Phil looks a little sour yet I ignore him and also snatch bag from my friend and grin at Malay. The man rolls his eyes, annoyed and throws his ball at Japan, opening up with the idea of swimming before eating. A quick discussion is held as seagulls scream above us. That is the true beach vibe. In the end, everyone wanting to swim gets ready to swim. Not even 2 minutes later me and Malay move towards and inside the water. The sea water feels fresh on the skin and not even cold and I enjoy the salty smell in the air. Ame follows, then South Korea and Vietnam with Phil in the back. Others join too. After a short time, almost every country is with us in the sea. Of course, I am the main troublemaker, but I just make it interesting~

Having fun laying on the water, vibing with the waves, suddenly, a

burst of salty sea water rains from my right into my ear and face. I lose balance from that and put my feet onto the soft, sandy ground and straighten up. Now the water level is not higher that my hip. I hiss and rub my eyes as they burn from the salt. Laughter is heard. Laughter with a suspicious polish accent. That bastard! It seems such as Poland is provoking a water-fight. In retaliation, while I'm busy with my eyes, Malay decides to take revenge for me and *causally* slams even more salty water in Poland's face, making him yelp out for help in surprise. I grin, he deserved that one! Shortly afterwards, the former peace breaks into a laughing and screaming mess as everyone starts to fighting at least one other country or another friend group. Okay- there is no way I let this happen without me! The unspoken rule of whom to team up with kicks in and I team up with my house mates against the others. It's fun, really a lot of fun.

After a while, the sun had already passed half way behind the horizon, I and also other heavily need to admit to ourselves that we ought to take a break, also from the amount of saltwater I swallowed I got very thirsty. Now everyone is just swimming, diving, playing with balls and talking in the water. A good time to make my leave. I heap towards Malay and crash into the water next to him, only sticking my head out to talk to him
"Hey Mal-" I call out to the now taller man. His gaze turns down to me.
"What's up?"
"I'm going outside the water for a bit." I say and smile, being sorry for leaving him and Phil alone.
"Aight Indo- I'll just continue to spy on the fish in here." Mal answers, pure excitement in his voice. Right, he loves fish. We laugh, but he's right- sort of. Fish are cool.
"Time I get out then."
"K"

I make my way back to the beach, going through a game of *'let's let the ball hop on the water surface to each other'*, and with my overall amount of luck get hit in the face. It's not that bad, yet I fall in the water anyways, just to be dramatic. Can feel my inner thoughts rolling its eyes. There are gasps and apologies right away but I simply dismiss them. I am not even bleeding calm down. Wandering

out the water, I spot Luxembourg sitting alone on a dune, looking over an empty and more quiet part of the sea.
Huh, strange, I wonder why.
'Perhaps we should leave him alone.'
"Nah! Why isn't he having fun with us?"
'Well there are things that we can't know. I really think- '
"You worry too much!" Sure, he seemed not fully present on the way here and he still is, but I wouldn't want him to miss out on this wonderful evening. Usually Lux is a little reserved, yet energetic and savage. Out of worry, but mostly curiosity, I feel the need of talking to him, again since everyone else is having fun- and even from the distance I can tell that he looks not only not present yet also sad- at least from my point of view. After drinking some not-salty water, very refreshing I can reassure, I decide to walk to him onto of the dune and sit down. Usually, it's not allowed to sit on dunes but there is barely any law here, also Germany and France are life guard in case anything goes wrong.

Awkward silence. Just the talking of the others, the waves and sounds of nature in the background.
"..." I put my elbows on my knees and rest my face on them, looking into the distance.
"What do you want, Indo?" Luxembourg suddenly asks, not looking at me, causing me to flinch. He sounds quite harsh- damn.
"I- uh-" I stutter, just now being hesitant of what to say, and inhale to finish my sentence properly.
'Al Allah. Why did you do that?!'
"You- You look really down- I wanted to know why? - This is such a great evening, there isn't any reason to feel sad." I finally spit out, not sure what to expect as answer. Lux exhales heavily and finally turns his head to me, staring into my eyes -no- he's staring right into my soul.
"...why do you care?"
"UH-" being caught off guard for a moment I didn't really know how to explain myself. I look back at him with widen eyes. I'm really bad at this, aren't I? I remain silent and look to the ground. What now? What now?! It remains silent for longer, until Lux exhales loudly again and to my absolute luck, he feels like talking at the moment. I think he just needs to tell someone about his problems/ feelings etc.- even if this person wouldn't be me. Just to get it off

the chest. I inch closer to him and we both look at the sunset, I stay quiet to listen.
"I just... have to think about him. I still miss him so much. Today marks 70 years without him, and it breaks my heart. Belgie is sad too..."
"..." I let Lux vent further before jumping to conclusions.
'WE SHOULDN'T BE HERE IN THE FIRST PLACE!'
"QUIET!"
'WE'RE INVADING HIS PRIVACY, YOU DINGUS!'
"I- I just think it's hard to see them like that without thinking about what happened to him, what you all did."

A little dumbfounded, I honestly don't know who he's talking about, I do my hardest to figure it out. I'd look like an idiot questioning Lux for 'his' name. 70 years? That's a lot of time passing. Who would even be alive after 70 years?? After another moment of silence, my brain fuses the neurons together and finally, I realize who he's talking about, and I feel really, *really* stupid. Of course, he's talking about his older brother: the Netherlands, also called Neth or Ned by everyone, he was part the Benelux Siblings.
I never liked him- more like the opposite. I don't mind that he is gone. Even now, there is still a bit of rage against him inside my soul. Maybe because he colonized me, torturing me for so long in the past. Yes... that's the reason. He hurt and others, at least he MUMBLED an apology but never gave any reason to- oh wait. I mentally roll my eyes as an old fire within my soul starts burning once again. **Spices.** Anger bubbles up inside of me. Indo, not now, you are an adult, it's been at least 150 years and his country did help mine in some ways to redeem himself, you didn't like him, but others did. Don't be disrespectful towards a dead person.
He did deserve whatever happened though.

"You knew him just a bit- didn't you?" Lux then asks me- sounding calm and quiet, giving me goosebumps.
"Well, I guess I only know his 'bad side', since I 'met' him as he... you know- colonized me... and left my family and people to be enslaved." I almost growl, remembering myself that I am an adult and not a child. Lux just nods- not showing any emotions and sits down again.
'You're so embarrassing right now.'

My thoughts spin through my head, processing what is going on. I understand him in some way? I just don't understand how he still grieves after 70 years...
I assume today, 70 years ago, Neth went missing. Just gone. Without a trace. I never knew why. Others always told me 'Not to worry' and that 'they'd handle him', even before he was missing. 'They'd handle him'. A weird formulation. They were also trying to be close to me all the time, cause again, I'm just that popular and liked~ Everybody loves me, after all! After a week, almost everyone gave up searching and soon after we just assume that he died somewhere, or got killed.
Well- everyone except Luxembourg, I guess. I'm not sure what to think about the whole thing- I never was in this exact same situation like Lux before, even though members of my family are dead too, so, can I even imagine how he feels? But eh- I don't care. Yet, that makes me wonder what it would be like if Malay or Phil suddenly disappeared and never showed up again...
Ugh... no, I don't want to think about it. They can be annoying, but I love them so much. They have been my family since our fathers died.
'And now we're sad or what?'
"You're ruining the moment."

The sky is turning from a fire-red shade into a purple, just before the deep blue, almost black darkness of the sky, some stars are already appearing, and the air gets cooler. Now, the tension is almost unbearable, as if Lux is just radiating it like Uranium and I get effected by it. After more intense silence, I just can't stand it anymore and stand up, walking back to everyone else. The others had gotten out of the water in the meantime, wow, we must have been here for quite a while already. I look back to the unmoving Luxembourg one last time and then join the others. They greet me- and of course I greet back, and eventually we start walking back, but while talking, the events that just happened keeps returning and I hears Lux's voice in my head. Why am I caring so much about it?! Nothing is my fault; it shouldn't affect me! I take a deep breath as my mood keeps on declining, damn it. I'll just need to sleep about it. Tomorrow it will be alright again. I am just overthinking! Ame seemed to notice my miserable mood, startling me a little
"Hey Indo- are you doing ok?"

"Uh- of course, why wouldn't I?"
"Your expression isn't quite '*ok*' if you ask me-"
"I'm fine... I just got something to think about."
"Oh- what is it?"
"Uh- nothing serious- really- you don't need to worry about it."
'Wow, aren't you going to whine? Like always?'
"No, Ame is too sensitive since the last century."
"Mm- ok. You can always talk to me if somethings wrong!" the American disrupted
"Mhm, thanks Ame" I thank him. Ame smiles at me, almost too bright. My stomach almost turns upside down. He is a nice guy.
"You guys go already, we other will follow up later, gonna do some star gazing!"

I walk away from him- right now I don't really want to talk with anyone around me. The hell has Lux done to my emotional state? It's all a mess! Luckily, the others notice and leave me alone, not starting any conversation with me, and I just trail along behind everyone. I'm thankful for this to be honest. We reach the beginning of the street, and by now I start to realize how late it is actually is. It's almost dark. It must be around 10 or 11pm. How though? It doesn't feel this late yet. Oh well, when times flies by. I follow the rest down the main street, every once in a while, countries leave into side streets, going to their own homes, respectably. Then Luxembourg and Belgium, who are suddenly here too, like holy shit I didn't even realize they had caught up! So, both of them are about to leave the group as well, making their way to their own house. Belgium turns around one other time.
"Goodbye! It was really a fun evening with you all!" Belgium smiles, waving at us while walking further down the side street. Lux nods, but only looks as soulless at me as before.
"Jeez."
'You deserve that stare so much.'
"Quiet, I'm not in the wrong!" In the blink of a second our eyes meet and I relive the uneasy tension between us. No one else seems to realize what is going on.
"Alright- see you, you two." Phil replies. We also wave at them and continue our way back home.

Phil, Malay and me are alone now. This is fine. I'm always with

them!
"Indo? Can I ask you something?" Phil suddenly asks me- catching me off guard. I need to be more prepared for conversations, this can't keep happening to me! Really! I look at him.
"Sure? -What is it?"
"What were you and Lux talking about earlier?" Malays ears peak up in interest, he glares at me too. I stop walking, standing there in shock for a second or more. Phil saw us? I thought he was busy in the sea like everyone else. But okay, lots of time passed and I managed to spot Lux from the beach too, it makes sense after all. Phil just looks calm and interested at me, waiting for an answer. I sigh, carefully picking my words out.
"Uh- Well- Nothing interesting, about life- you know?" I say- hoping to sound normal. Mal switches critical looks between me and Phil. Phil stares a bit longer at me and nods slowly.
I exhale- inside. Mal decides to change the topic and leads into another conversation. He never took tension very well. But I gotta admit- he's pretty good at changing conversations for the better, and talking overall. Not soon after, we arrive home for the night. Oh man, what a day-
'What a day.'

2| Inner Monolouge

A few days have passed, I think. I didn't do really anything- just laying around, breaking my brain with question which I can't answer right now. Everything just happened so fast. I still don't understand every event, yet otherwise it's getting sort of boring. Maybe, just maybe, I should explore my surrounding area a little. I ball my hand into a fist to get my blood stream circulating more again. I'll need another minute to regain my strength, I mean, I need to get up eventually. Also, my empty stomach is starting to kill me. After a minute, I slowly stand up, recalibrating my balance, breathing heavily. Suddenly, there is a sharp pain across my chest and I gasp in surprise, also loosing balance once more. W...What? No way! Breathing heavily, I look down to see my yellowish poncho turning red, sticking to my chest. Shit! This is not good! I clench my arm over the wound to prevent it from bleeding further. My scar hasn't reopened in ages! How did that happen?! The scar, existing from my first death many years ago is so annoying at times! And now, I have to deal with the pain for a while until I stitch the wound... meaning I can't sprint, do exercise or magic. It makes me truly weak, causing me to suddenly not feel save around this place anymore. At least it's peaceful, an open area: I'd be able to see enemies, even though I can't defend myself. Too be fair, they would be able to spot me immediately as well because I'm like- really tall. I sigh, clearly frustrated. God, my emotions are just so stirred up- and the wound is still coloring my poncho dark red. I look at the sky, dwelling in self-doubt.
Pff- all those events are ironically funny. Or weird? Or pathetic? Really, fate has just always been against me, at home, on travels and even now at my new lowest.

I concentrate my breathing to ease the pain and get a clear head. Okay, good, you can handle this, buddy. My identity needs to stay hidden, people look weird at me all the time, I wouldn't want that, especially in times I need help. I remember past interactions for a moment and dwell on insults, making my mental state worse and breaking my breathing pattern. I gasp and immediately clench my teeth, forcefully calming. From what I've learned, listening to your inner voice is the right choice to make. So, like I just said, I decide to listen the uneasy feeling coming

from my stomach -not only because of the wound- and reach with my right hand over my shoulders to my coat and put on the hood. Beneath the poncho I wear another coat with a hood. I also had a bag with some belongings, but I lost it, sadly. I unconsciously touch my neck in search for my scarf. A fuzzy, orange one. Thank God it is still there. The scarf has been giving me comfort my entire life and it would do great to bandage my open wound for a while. I had glasses too, yet my eye sight got incredible with the power up, so I traded them in a medieval universe for the poncho. It gives me more use for survival, you see. My now pretty red soaked poncho is usually yellowish-white with a light blue moon sickle over the right side and shoulder. It keeps me pretty warm, protects my skin against the sun and reduces attack's effects and I can hide my body. It's also fire proof because of my magic. The coat underneath covers my face, leaving it in shadows. Which is good. My companion always thought it was funny to see my eyes shine through the black shadows on my face, probably the reason I can see pretty well.

I straighten up and clear my mind, throwing a short thought at my companion. We moved to other places and she pointed out the fact that the coat is a mass update for me, she suggested me having it, to stop being so insecure about my body and face, to be more confident and better at the things I do. She said that, and she is right most of the time. I carefully bang my fist against my head. Stop dwelling thoughts, you need to stitch that wound and find out where you are! And that right away! I look around my current area, taking the surrounding in I previously just felt with my other senses. This place is truly beautiful! And more importantly: I was right. Around me is a wide field of long grass, mixed with trenches, probably home to small creeks and streams watering the area. Another soft breeze floats by and I relax a little at natures beauty. Turning to the big light bulb in the golden-orange sky I also spot the sea in the distance. So, my nose didn't trick me after all! Very good! I come to the conclusion that It's evening, the sun touching the horizon, steadily vanishing. Seagulls scream in the distance and the wind carries other screams with it as well. A mass of voices, indistinguishable from each other. People?! The thought both relieve and terrifies me. The best move would be to go to them, but I also fear the idea...

Weird. I'll... take that option just in case. I take another good look around the area. It seems oddly familiar, but I've been in so many

different worlds, so it's hard to pin point a specific one. Yet, my gut tells me it's not good. I take a deep breath and look at the sun, sorting my thought once more to the main points of happening.
Alright, to get to a conclusion to yourself:
-I got a gaping reopened scar across my chest and it's slowly killing me
-I have the strange feel that I've been here before
->I don't remember where this place is
->I don't know where this weird feeling is coming from

Strange. Very strange. It's almost scary.

Despite my worries, I start to heap slowly through the vast grass landscape, trying to put as little pressure on my chest and not to fall. I also keep looking around, being as careful as I ever could, sweating bullets as the area eventually get even more vast and I start approaching a series of hills, spotting a rather deeply falling a valley behind them. The view is quite beautiful to be honest.
All the hills are empty, counting out the long grass and the occasional bushes, which growth to vaster at the bottom of the hills. There are trails among them, either animal or manmade, maybe both. Makes it easier to walk, at least. I walk on a path, my feet tearing me towards a specific hill: the largest one around, my mind completely wiped blank. I know, I'm pretty off guard now, but I can't help it. Something... is so peacefully familiar to me. The embracing warmth of the sun, I need it.
This walking goes on until I stand on top of that hill. There is a single tree. A large one. An oak tree with a deep, green crown. It's a very healthy plant. The only tree around the entire area, you can see very, very far into the distance. While the side I came from is steadily going up and down between the hillside, the other side, facing the ocean, is falling so steep that it looks like a cliff. It would be deadly for a normal animal or human to fall this height. In my current state I'd probably survive. Yeah- I'd just teleport down there anyways, it's faster than relying on the physics of gravity.
Despite my situation I decide that I wish to sit inside the tree to watch the sunset. There isn't anything better to do anyways. I glare up the oak log to find myself a good branch to rest on, debating if I should climb up or teleport. Both options wouldn't be exactly beneficial for me, yet climbing would be worse for the wound. So, I jump up the tree and feel a sting in my chest, concentrating on my breathing again. Calm down, the pain is temporary. I straighten my head up while sitting to get an even

better view over the area.
Looking around the area, I spot high, relatively thick, metal fences with barbed wires on top. Well, that is quite unnatural. What the hell is this place? I take look closer at where the fence is leading. In a short time, I jump to the conclusion that the entire area is surrounded by this kind of fence, seemingly closing in on both sides at the sea, making it quite difficult for things to enter and leave. Well except if they're birds or others with magic of course. I wonder if it's enchanted with magic, making it a cage. But then I have even more questions than answers. Who is keeping whom here? And why?
Deep in thought, I stare longer at my surroundings, the sun vanishing from the skyline, the sky getting increasingly darker, stars start to appear in the sky.
The entire time I cannot shake the feeling off to know this place very well. It scares me. You don't just see a distinguished landscaped plus some heavily armed fence like this anywhere.
Again, it seems so familiar and- I hit my own head in frustrations again. UHRG! NO- SHUT UP! STOP IT!
-Get out of my head already, damn it! I don't even know where I am! I sigh. As if the hitting did something, my brain suddenly makes a connection with a far-away past memory. I... don't know where I am? Or... do I? No, impossible. The chances are nearly zero. Breaking my brain with my own thoughts further, I lower my eyes into the valley, desperate to disproof the theory. I notice a small town at the bottom of the hill. It's not even that far away and both near the sea and the paths leading up to this place. The nearest streets contain multiple houses, near enough for me to make out former details...
Many one-family homes... only one-family homes. In the unmoving silence down in the valley, only accompanied by the distant sounds of the ocean and the wind, I soon notice movements. I narrow my eyes in hope to make out more details.
I see, even from the distance, a bunch of what I assume to be people walking in one of the nearby streets. Seems like they are coming from the beach, looking at their movement back inside the countryside. Strangely enough, they seem actually quite colorful... not like the usual humans, other races, maybe? Then I wouldn't have to be so insecure with them about my dark blue skin color. I should still be careful though, since I'm not down there, seeing them in a close up, I just see the group from the distance.

My brain, processing the freshly acquired knowledge, is presenting me the facts that I have nothing to disprove its theory. Glaring further down, I sigh.
"No way... it has been ages since I've encountered this kind of situation." I quietly mumble to myself, while my head fills itself with pictures. My hand starts playing with my lower lip and chin in an attempt to reduce stress.
"I always knew there were so many timelines and alternate world, yet the chances were always very slim, as she said. But that I'd land in a place with them right after what happened." I look in the sky.
"I don't know if I should be relieved or stressed to encounter other personified countries."

I sigh once again, my stomach turning upside down and sour saliva with an irony taste fills my mouth. Disgusted, I spit it out and down the tree. I need to get a better look at the situation, immediately. Without further thinking I quickly jumped down the tree, and as soon as I land on my feet the pain is unbearable and I break down to the ground, spitting blood into the deep green grass. Fuck! I totally forgot! I gasp for air and despite my bad state I force myself to stand up once more, heavy cramps shaking my body. If I fall unconscious and they'll find out, it's over. I'll be good as dead, probably. Depends on the timeline. With heavy breathing I slowly take steps a bit closer to the edge of the hill. The wound is draining my regained power faster and I feel a little dizzy due to the loss of blood. In my vast determination to stay on my feet and not collapse I take all of my concentration to focus, spying down in the streets. I need to make sure if they really are Countryhumans or not! A moment of silence passes as only the wind is making its presence clear.

Yeah- those should be countries. I can't tell exactly who due to the distance and lighting, yet I suddenly observe as the walking crowd stops in its tracks. I wonder what they are doing now? I focus on the group's movement- why did they stop?
I see the crowd parting in smaller groups from time to time, continuing moving from street to street, splitting into smaller groups each time. Each group moves in another direction. Most of the groups move away to other streets, and in terms with the state of the break of the night, I assume they're walking to their homes, the sun is gone and the moon is already getting really visible. A moon sickle, a declining one to be exact. I haven't thought of where I stay tonight yet, the place is probably here ,

outside underneath the sky. Isn't like I can really go anywhere in this state or do anything. I mean I could make my way down there and get help, but the thought is still terrifying. I like being alone. I have been most of my life. With no other escape for my eyes, I turn to look at the sky once again. The sky is pretty clear, I shouldn't have any difficulties with rain or storm. But as they say, the weather at the coast changes vastly. Whether that is a problem or not, the location is pretty nice up here. Now back to the important part. I continue to watch with dangerously growing curiousness, until that one group that remained from the start disintegrated completely, and a smaller one made its appearance, around 4-5 people, I think. Observing closer, they are moving in a continuous direction- the direction of the hills- away from the houses, not stopping, even leaving the paved street at some point, hiking up one of the pathways I mentioned earlier to myself. Probably to the hill I am standing on. How have I identified that? Experience. I must assume that they have spotted me, I'm not ready for a confrontation yet.

I put my hand on my chin, mentally vanishing in the ground just as the sun did at the skyline not long ago. I lower my head further, closing my eyes for a moment.
"Am I this noticeable?" I catch myself speaking my thoughts out loud again, a following breeze giving me goosebumps. Whops, I didn't intend to do that. To be honest- I don't really have good memories with the most countries. Especially with the old Dutch Republic, and some Asian countries, including a few others from different continents. I had to do some messed up stuff and they never forgave me, even after an explanation, torturing me with little break for years. I exhale shakily. A dark time to reflect on. But... I deserved it right? I did the bad stuff. I stayed at the Dutch's household. They were caring enough to give me that shelter after a war that had occurred. Yet, Dutch only viewed me as failure and I left with some scars and I went away with my friend. I shut my eyes more closed at the trauma so long ago, feeling myself shaking. That was the past, and not today. Today is different.

Lost in thoughts- I was fully caught off guard as I suddenly feel like my heart stop beating, time around me seems to slow down, everything around me becomes darker. No, I can't pass out yet, especially as it seems like they are coming to confront me!

I gasp and blink back into reality, moving a little on my feet while taking

breaths to get oxygen back into the system. The state I've been in disappears, time being normal again, the area turning like before. My head hurts, my chest burns. I take a few steps back and lean against the tree. Just continue to take deep breaths- it's going to be alright. Now that I've come clear to the reality of knowing where I am and what impact it had on my life, I feel like vomiting. I curse at the fact that I don't own the power of opening portals to other worlds and merely move from place to place within a world. It sucks to be weak. I really ought to get more power in the future. As soon as she picks me up from this hell. I've been bad with emotional control my whole life and those specific feelings... I haven't had them in years. Damn this god forsaken place! The anger rushes through me, giving me the adrenaline to keep going.

With the burning passion in mind, I shoot up, opening my eyes widen and sharpening my senses, looking around once, now recognizing the area and its little things, memories coming back. Yes. It makes perfect sense. I really have been here. I struggle a little to really come to terms with my reality. The cliff-like hill with the forest at its toes, the small town at the beach, the fences to keep danger out, isolating Countryhumans. They had told me that at some point humans isolated the countries from the rest of the world for 'safety' precautions. I was stupid enough to believe it, but know I see how wrong this is! Was I stupid! Naïve! And now I'm back in this hell again. Why did she send me here?! Or was it even her?! Has she even realized what she had done?! I don't know!
I keep breathing heavily, the blood from my mouth staring to dry up, becoming unpleasantly sticky. I shut my eyes close again to refocus. Be calm, anger doesn't help. You've been an emotional rollercoaster the entire day. Let it go, leave the past behind.

Snapping out of thoughts of the past, I readjust my task of scanning over the area as best to my ability, especially where I saw the upcoming counties last, searching for them to check how much time I have to prepare myself until they're arrive at my location. I take a good moment to spot them, as it has gotten darker. I would be lighting my surrounding up if I had the energy to use magic, yet I don't want to reveal that I have that to them yet. Worst case scenario is that they treat me like a witch in the medieval Europe. I get startled as the group got already way closer than I anticipated. God darn are they quick. For how long have I been in a trance? With the countries coming closer my panic internally rises.

Exactly three options stir in my mind, wiping the business blank as I am faced with their arrival.
-Approach
-Flight
-Fight

My mind goes through all three options at top speed. Flight is immediately ruled out due to my physical state, fight as well, for the same reason, leaving approach, or being approached as the only option possible in my situation. In realization with that conclusion a knot forms in my stomach, exhilarating the already present pain. I now have enough power to get my payback. My sweet, sweet revenge. In fact, thinking about it, I kind of do want to take revenge out of disappointment in them as a collective society and my anger, back then they all threw me around like a puppet even if they understood the situation I was in. Yes. It's their fault I'm like this. Broken. Hated. Suffering. And here... far away from law and military, there will be no consequences for my future actions. I feel the anger and hate growing, growling in my stomach- forming my hand to a fist- already feeling it heating, yet grinning at the possibilities I have.

I breath in, and out, regaining a neutral expression. As great as it is, this isn't the right time. No, not now. No one is going to burn within my fire today. Beautiful, blue fire.
Still, as I am thinking my temporary plan/idea over, this isn't the right moment to take revenge. What could I do to make it as bittersweet as possible? Maybe gain their trust and then backstab them? Oh, that is the worst form of betraying in my opinion. Am I sadistic? Sometimes, sure. Also, I should wait until she finds me first. If she ever comes to rescue me. Actually, she's probably already out searching for me, as I know her, she wouldn't want to miss this. She is far too sadistic. She will get here eventually, there are quite many worlds out there, after all. More than there are stars in the sky. But my first idea sounds like a good plan for now, and I will get help even if I'm scared. Oh well. I guess I'm going to let them approach me then...

I gaze upon the path the countries walk to reach their destination. But then my anxiety overtakes my mind once more, making use of the emotional wreck my mind is. What if... what if they recognize me by my voice, or looks? Alright I admit, the first one would be absolutely insane,

but it is possible, right? RIGHT?
I, shouldn't speak just to be completely sure. I wouldn't be able to form much sentences anyways as I am just this shy in general, minus the fear factor. I don't know what they told the others after they've seen me leave, surely, they would have been at least one person who watched. There always is. And if this one, unnamed person isn't dead yet, they have to live with this experience their whole life. Well in fact- they surely didn't tell them the truth. No one would have had believed them anyways. Maybe they told them that I committed suicide, or they said nothing and I was reported missing. Still, maybe they recognize me. I'm tall and have dark blue skin, not everyone has that.

Or am I just running insane out of my own fear?

I shake the thoughts aside decide to prepare myself mentally for the upcoming meeting. I wonder just how they will react seeing me this insured. I can't screw that up, show my face, speak or pass out. I learned sign language before; I could use that- yet I only have one hand right now. While I'm trying to remember sign language, I pray that it hopefully works.
Then I take a deep breath and try to relax my muscles at least a tiny little bit. Sadly, it didn't work, my body is that tense. I stop leaning against the tree, even heap a few meters away from it underneath the sky. I need more space. The group is already on the hill next to mine, less than 50 m away.
I just wait for them to arrive at my location.

As they arrive, I surprisingly recognize everyone in the dim light that is still remaining.
There is the USA, they call him America, or Ame, Poland, Greenland(?), Russia and also Japan
-a group with opposite personalities as far as I remember... they are all quite different from each other. How did that constellation happen?
Well, it has been quite some time. But I guess I should worry about other things right now...

3| Discovering and Aiding

Poland's POV

After the others finally decided to go home, me, Greenland, Japan, Ame and Russia did some star gazing before going back too. Right this instant, we all are on our way to approach a stranger, who's appearance is quite unusual. No one ever gets in here because of the metal fence and the oddness of our general location. I doubt anyone of us know where we actually are on the globe. We get food and other things we need via ship every week. Every Saturday morning at 10am. The only contact with the outside world in a long while. I wonder how my people are doing? The upside is, we don't even need to pay for it. Our governments do. So yeah, that's how things work here, quite peaceful and even monotone, we definitely don't expect strangers like them any when. So of course, we ought to investigate. The person in question is on that one hill with the big ass oak tree. Ame and Russia spotted them, and Japan, Greenland as well as me were there too and joined, well, to be honest the truth would that we've all been dragged in. Willingly, and unwillingly. And usually, I actually don't want to disturb anyone when they're enjoying their privacy, yet I am very curios, just like the others. The person we're approaching is just starring at us, not moving or anything. I don't know if they're male or female because they are around, 20 to 30 m away, I'd say. I can't identify that person just yet. What seems clear though is that their clothing shines in an unnatural dark color around their chest. Is that blood?! From the idea alone I get goosebumps and slow down. Who is this? Have they been injured by the fence? Why are they here? Do they mean harm? I stop as I get anxious. Maybe coming here wasn't the best idea after all. I've never seen them before. We aren't even there and I can already tell that this person is odd. Or is it because I'm not used to see a different figure? Questions form in my head. Questions I can't answer.
As I am falling further and further behind the group, overwhelmed

with my thoughts, Japan notices, slowing down to the same walking speed as me.
"Poland!! Hello? You in there?" she rips me out of my thoughts with yelling. I yelp- flinching, stopping to walk. I look at the eastern country, who is looking at me with an unidentifiable expression.

I really need to work on my identification skills-
Silence. Oh shit- I forgot to reply-
"Oh, yeah. Sorry, let's go." I reply, starting to run before Japan could be able to start questioning me. So, we both run, catching up to the others, who are already standing in front of the unknown person, an uneasy aura radiating from them. Japan arrived first since she is faster than me. But everyone is faster than me so that's sadly normal. It's also sad that I am the smallest person of the group, and to balance that out I just shove myself through the others- getting a good look at the stranger, who is being flashed at with a flashlight Russia carried.

My eyes turn widen and my knees get soft like butter. The person in front of us is really tall, like extraordinary tall. From my position I'd say as tall or even taller than Russia. Wow. The person wears a white poncho with a big light blue sickle over their right, left from my view, shoulder and side. The poncho is deep red at the persons chest, the reflection of the wet blood shining in the light. Looking up, the figure also wears a hood, which throws shadows covers their face, only leaving Nose and Mouth visible, and from both is dropping blood down as well. I give it my best to not gasp. ARE THEY OKAY?! WHAT IN THE WORLD!
Despite the red meet, their skin has a dark blue color. Nothing unusually- there are others with dark blue skin as well, Australia for example. The stranger just stands there, heavily breathing and we stand there, shocked. The air is heavy. It's so thick even I can feel it down here.

Continuing to stare, I notice something in the stranger's behavior. The person seems scared? Huh... Are we that scary? Too be fair, we have been isolated for a good while now and I'm sure that is their first time seeing a Countryhuman, maybe that's why they're so uncomfortable? Oh god, they shouldn't be scared, they really need help! We should request some doctors to come over and help them!

Ame carefully takes a step forward, causing the stranger to an irrational and hectic backup, almost causing them to fall. Ame immediately stops, seemingly realizing the heaviness of the situation too. I guess we are pretty scary then, I do not like that. Japan tries to start a conversation.
"Hey, you! What happened?!" she calls out. No response. I wonder if they speak English? Or do they speak at all? Japan continues barraging the opposing person with questions, as they use one shaky hand to do some motions. Finally, Greenland sets himself into motion, he seemed to have noticed the communication barrier with the human in front of us. Greenland walks over to Japan and shoves her back into the mass of the rest of us.

"Japan, shut up, I'm handling that now.", Greenland says, clearly annoyed.
"But-", Japan starts, already sounding upset.
"Can't you see that you- or maybe we scare them? Perhaps? Let Greenland try." I also enter the argumentation, which finally makes her shut up and look back to the injured person. Greenland gives me a supportive nod, then sighs loud and annoyed- mumbling something in his native language. I don't understand Greenlandic to know that he would like too not be here anymore. Sorry, my friend. Anyways Greenland finally slowly approaches the stranger, who is still standing awkwardly in front of us.

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A country, I'm pretty sure it's Greenland? White, red with the opposite indie the flag in a ball, yes, that ought to be him. He is approaches me, calmer than Japan initially did. I don't trust the whole thing even a teeny tiny little bit, so I keep on backing up, wanting to keep my personal distance. Especially since they're using this flashlight on me. This confrontation is stressing me out so much. And I can barely stand anymore- I've lost so much blood. Well, they all seem quite concerned for me, but will that change? What will I do if they find out who I actually am?! Will they report me to the military?! Bring me back to him? Or even worse??! As I am trapped in my anxious thoughts, backing up, my heart is beating loud and painfully against my chest, I hear the blood rushing through my ears and saliva is collecting in my mouth, indicating to vomit. Greenland's movement stops. Good. In return, I also stop backing up, mostly because I can feel the ground underneath me

fall, meaning if I take a few more steps- I am going to roll down this hill. I'd rather not wanting that to happen, my injuries are bad enough. I'd only make fun of myself too... as well as risking my current position as 'stranger'. I look at Greenland. He looks at me calmly, probably sensing my nervousness, trying to calm me down with his calming aura. Too bad it only makes me panic more! I want to run away you know!
But, not this time, you have to survive, you have a plan. Get your shit together.
The others in the background just silently watch the entire scene.

"Hey, uh... Sorry about those idiots. Just ignore them. We don't mean you any harm", Greenland says with the attempt of slightly smiling at me. Japan looks outraged at him. Poland seems sort of offended too. Great. What next? I don't say anything and just continued staring at the group. Greenland makes a quick motion in sign language, asking if I am mute. Mute... right, yes, I am. I slightly nod and Greenland seems a tiny little bit surprised.

Before Green gets the chance to lead this conversation any further, Poland shoves himself in the foreground, an overwhelming amount of impatience radiating from him, just like a signal tower. Uhm.
"Sorry if we come up as scary or make you nervous or anything! Uhm- uh- you just seem **VERY INJURED** and we are **VERY WORRIED**!! We've also never seen you before- and usually we never get visitors since we are isolated from you humans. What happened?!" *he spills the tea with a high-pitched voice and extreme speed, making it almost difficult to understand. The facts hit me hard. In multiple ways. Of course, I am relieved, they have not recognized me immediately, that was my goal to begin with, yet on the other side, it reminds and proves further to me that I'm back in the universe in which suffered quite a bit. The circumstances are exactly the same. It's just my luck. Also, Poland are you serious? Like damn, do you even remember what humans look like? They have every skin color but mine- and purple maybe. I know they get a little green or blue of the cold- but no deep dark blue like I have- BUT I'm not going to complain. How dare he compare me to a simple human being?! I'm kidding, I'm really not trying to offense anyone, my situation is sort of fortunate.*
The other problem is that I didn't think of another name for myself, and uh- I'm really bad with names actually-
I snap out of my thoughts as I realize that the others are still waiting for

an answer. I open my mouth, spit saliva and blood to the side and close it right away. Man, am I impressed with myself that I am able to keep going like this. And right- I'm 'mute'. I decide to stay quiet. Instant I raise one of my hands, which is shaking for oblivious reasons. Right- I almost forgot as I was busy silently questioning/raging over Poland's IQ.
'I don't remember my name-' I sign. I sense visible confusion from Poland, Japan, Ame and Russia- only Greenland looks relaxed. Ah, he is understanding, of course he would, nice.
"They said they don't remember their name." *Greenland clarifies for the confused countries. And yes- I'm certainly sure now- Greenland understands Sign language. Good for me- I agree with his statement by nodding.*

"Sorry for the weird question-" *Japan suddenly asks, raising her hand, smiling in a weird way.*
"I want to clarify- what pronouns are you comfortable with? I just want to know before I say anything wrong." *she proceeds to explain herself. Everyone turns their head to Japan. I sure am confused at the request, but somehow quite amused at the same time. I mean, nice of her to ask? I guess?*
'I go with He/Him- also I'm male, thanks for asking, I guess?' I try to get the message across and Greenland translates to the best of his ability. It's not perfect, but good enough. Japan looks happy to have her answer, almost too happy and that smile sort of freaky- actually it disturbs me a lot, especially with the red eyes and fangs.

A few quiet moments passed as I am busy freaking out about Japan's aura. Russia- for the first time in this whole conversation- clears his throat.
"You should come with us. We need to call a doctor.*" he reasons very well. But that'd mean I'd have to reveal my identity and everyone would know I'm here! No! That can't happen! I heavily shake my head.*
"No?" *the Russian questions, slightly irritated. Poland seems frantic.*
"But what if you die?!"
"Calm down everyone!" *Ame shuts the others and sounds very serious. He then looks to me.*
"Is there a reason you don't want to see a doctor?*" I get questioned by him. I nod, fearing whatever would come next.*
"Well, we gotta help you ourselves then! Last time a medic has been here he left some equipment and taught somehow to use it! We'll go

with that!" *the American announces and he is a life saver. Quite literally. Ame motions to Japan.*
"Call Singa right away! We need him immediately! Russia, we'll use your Vodka to clean his wounds!"
"что?!"
WHAT?! I'll die! Just as I thought I'd be saved this happens?! Japan motions away and drastically takes out her phone, presumably calling Singapore. I stand there in shock, fearing the upcoming pain more than my identity being revealed. The things I do for my revenge. Ame approaches me carefully and suddenly grabs my arm, causing me to flinch, making the chest paint worse.
"Stay calm, I'll will not look at you if that is what you fear." he speaks, amazing me even further. Stunned by his skill of revelation, I let him slowly push me back to the tree, sitting me down at its logs. From the now lower perspective I watch Ame taking the lead, snatching Russia's bottle of alcohol and reapproaching me. He removes his shirt and lifts both my poncho and coat. The fresh air starts burning my flesh and tense up, shaking a little. My vision gets blurs and I make out how Poland shifts to me my side, grabbing onto my bloody hand, gently pressing it with both of his. They are so... supportive. Surely just because they don't know me. Ame uses his shirt to carefully wipe the blood away from the wound. It hurts! I grab onto Poland's hand and inhale deeply to resist the pain.
"Alright. I'll dip my shirt in the vodka and then clean you wound."
Ame announces his plans and counts down from three. I prepare as best as I can as the America applies the first aid. The alcohol shoots deep into my veins and the pain overtakes my whole body. I gasp in pain and clench my teeth, making rapid breathing movements. I use all my concentration to remain as quiet as possible. I can't scream, it would ruin everything! Poland grabs stronger onto my hand, patting my shoulder in attempt to calm me down. It really doesn't help. It's so much worse that I had imagined! I lean my head against the tree and gaze with teary eyes through the leaves into the night sky. My body feels hot, I'm sweating, the wound is burning like fire. Just make it stop! Please! I breath fast and heavily as Ame is doing the procedure of cleaning my chest. My brain gets numb I let everything happen in hopes it would be over soon.

Yelling is heard in the distance and in reaction Japan yells too. Is that Singapore? I look with my blurry vision straight ahead to see a person

vastly approaching.
"I'm here!" *an unfamiliar male voice yells, presumably Singa. Ame shouts back.*
"Finally! He's bleeding out!"
"What a wound! How is he not unconscious yet?!"
"That doesn't matter right now! I already cleaned it! Get the stripe-things!"

Ame shifts to one side to make space for the Asian. Good question, I feel quite dizzy, but not knocked out yet. My adrenaline really is amazing. And what sort of 'stripe-things' are they talking about? Not soon after I feel something being attached to my chest, parallel to the scar, that on both sides. Poland tries to calm me.
"Shh. This might hurt. Those things will hold your skin in place so it heals better. Kind of like stitching, but without the needle." *he explains and indeed, I am a little less worried now. But as soon as Singapore starts closing the wound like this, it feels more like they are ripping the skin on my chest apart. My chin already hurts from clenching my teeth like this and I am getting tired. Yet I successfully remain conscious until they're done and Ame warps some bandages around the wound. The pressure eases the pain a bit. I shakingly reach out with my hand, silently asking for either a tissue or water. Both luckily are smart to react with my situation and I get handed a tissue. I wipe my tears and clean my bloody face to best of my abilities. Afterwards I carefully take some sips of water, sadly not getting the irony taste out of my mouth, but I feel a little better. In fact, so much better that I attempt to stand up. The others seem utterly surprised at my abilities and Poland (probably the worst option) aids me in standing. Singa mumbles something, seemingly impressed. I raise my head to get that cool night breeze inside my face, cooling my down a little. Meanwhile, Greenland and Singapore talk.*
"He's an outsider and doesn't remember his name? Amnesia, maybe?"
"Maybe, we don't know."
"Of course we don't, but what's up with the face covering" *Singa gets suspicious. Oh no-*
"Let him have his privacy. We are total strangers to him, remember?" *Ame jumps in, defending me. Oh Ame, if you only knew the truth.*
"Aha. We should go back. Russia, Greenland, you are the tallest, you

two aid him in walking." *Singa demands as Poland hesitantly lets go.*

Slowly, we make our way down the hills. In normal circumstances I'd be freaking out entering that hell hole, but my nerves are too dead after what I had endured just now. I just want to rest at a safe place. At least I am not actively spitting blood right now. The silence is sort of uneasy still, it seems to really effect the Russian.
"Uh... so you don't even remember where you are from?" *He questions. I think for a moment about my answer and just weakly shake my head in the end.*
"Bummers.*" Russia sighs, focusing on the way ahead. Greenland makes himself part of the conversation, yet he intentionally speaks loudly so everyone would be able to hear his concerns.*
"We need you to stay somewhere for the night, right? The street is not an option. You need a proper bed, and someone to look over you. Preferable a quiet household." *Greenland speaks- making me more nervous again. Through the pain I nod again. Ame started smirking at this quote on quote 'answer'.*

Ame then decides to speak:
"Don't worry, I have the right people! None of this will be a problem, because **I**, the United States of America, will get this man a place to rest at!" *his sunglasses shine in light of the flashlight as he looks back at us. Ame then takes out his phone and calls a number.*
"Who you're calling*?", Poland asks, curious, just like everyone.*
"Philippines! He is caring, organized and keeps his friends quiet. He also owes me a favor as I haven't forgiven him for taking my sunglasses at the beach today." *Ame explains in great detail. Philippines... Phil. MalPhilIndo. As I remember the name of this trio, my mood drops even further- below zero maybe. A part of me hopes that this call is not going to happen. But on the other side I'm not even bothering to ask what exactly happened at the beach.*
"LOL Ok-" *Japan snickers as Ame puts the phone to his ear.*

America spins around as he talks loud and cheerful at the phone. This man's mood swings are truly a mystery to me, yet very impressive.
"Yo Phil!" *he greets the person on the other side of the line, having a sinister grin.*
"Nothing- I just want to ask something." *the male continues.*

"WELL- you see- we found a dude out here and he kind offff needs a place to stay-"
Ame's face turns from excitement to a sigh.
"Calm down, let him stay, your house is the nearest by from here- and your house is clean! Not like mine. Also isn't a new person from the outside interesting?? He needs medical attention too! You visited the course they held!" *the American continues talking, not even waiting for a response anymore.*
"AND ALSO I will forgive you for taking my glasses at the beach today" *Ame smiles as he gets quiet for a second, then grinning even brighter.*
"Thank you~ we'll be at your house in a few moments!"

I see the man ending the call.
"Great news! He's taking him in!"
"Uhm... great job, Ame!"
"Poor Phil." *I hear Greenland sighing. I look to the ground, feeling a little bad that I am causing so much trouble to all. Or is that part of my plan?*

Indonesia's POV

Malaysia and I are just chilling on the couch, relaxing after the fun evening at the beach. The outside is dark, and our street light outside the home is broken too. So, it's just dark. I hear Phil letting out a heavy and annoyed sigh after Ame just called him. I wonder what the call was about- well, Phil seems pretty annoyed. Just as I decide to ask him what happened, Mal seems to have the same idea though and is faster than me.
"Is everything alright?" Mal asks, causing Phil to stare us dead in the eyes. Damn, what in the world did Ame want?
"Ame kind of 'made' me letting a stranger stay with us. A stranger in need of medical attention." he said. Well, that's a surprise.
"Okay?" I say- not really knowing how to react. Phil walks over to us and tears Malay off the couch, an expression of annoyance printed in his face.
"You are coming with me cleaning the guest room. Now. Indo, you get the medical kit from the kitchen." Phil says, sounding 100% dead inside, while Mal is just being dragged upstairs. I watch them leave, get up, grab the medical box and sit down again. I just sit

quietly on the couch. That is something. A stranger? Here? That's unusual. I thoughts the borders are closed? They're injured? I wonder what they're like. And how long will they stay? Many, many questions. I just sit on the couch for 10 more minutes, doing absolutely nothing except pondering. Then, the doorbell rings.

"I'LL GET IT!" I yell to the others upstairs. I get an "OKAY" from Phil as response. Wasting no time, I stand up and quickly walk to the door, assuming that it must be the new person, actually- I'm quite excited. Finally, something happens in this town! Then I open it, fresh air slams into my face, yet also the smell of blood. What...? Okay, that makes me uneasy. It's already really dark outside, not completely, but very dark. Ame stands in the front. Right behind him are Greenland and Russia, ading a tall person in walking. Their clothing is blood stained; they are breathing quite heavy. They are taller than both Green and Russia, and sort of scary. Yet also fascinating. Ame notices me staring and wondering.
"Indo- are you good? You look like you've seen a ghost-" Ame starts questioning me- I think I overheard the greeting if there was any.
"U-uh yeah- I'm great."
"Alright then! This is the buddy that we found and aided." The American continues rambling.
"He has a giant wound across his chest that needs to be kept in check! Also, don't remove his hood, he gets anxious about that. Also, he can't talk."
"Aha..."
"Where is Phil?"
"Cleaning."
"Oh, then we should just bring him inside."
"Ah okay."

I step aside as Rus and Greenland help the person sit down on the couch. Poland, who is also here rushes inside and draws a big blanket from a closet, handing it to him, making me feel kind of useless. Soon after they leave, promising to return tomorrow. A little perplex, I close the door and progress the information before turning around and walking to our... 'guest'.

Extra Chapter

I float around nothingness, regenerating from it. It helps me heal. Vast nothingness with none and infinite energy at the same time. Maybe, a world will be born here someday. Black liquid forming my body into shape. And here I am now, in the complete darkness, pretty much somewhere in nowhere, literally nowhere. I spend some time in this world I woke up in after the fight against him, it was surprisingly fun actually, the sadistic kind of fun. The enjoyment to see other beings bleed and absorb their lifespan is a joy that is hard to describe. It's been a pleasure doing that with him once. It was so beautiful, the burning energy inside his soul for an immortal life, just like me. Most universes and travels are quite entertaining, almost nice and interesting. I began to see beings with a consciousness such as myself in two categories to stop sugarcoating things: either they are nice or toxic. Sometimes, their properties switch, yet their soul always shows the true color of a person. And when people die, their soul turns into a piece of the nothingness. Every time~ There is no escape from me~
I stretch and float around myself, navigating where up is and where down would be. A motion without end, as there is no gravity here. The right way up could be everything.
I conclude that I've wasted enough of my endless time and should get back to 'work'. I still need to find him if- even though it was quite disappointing that he had to leave mid fight, yet I wish not him to have died just yet. I need him. He is such entertainment, so influential. Sadly, I have no idea where he could ever be, as was quite busy at the time to check where'd he end up. My mistake, but it makes everything so much more interesting~

It's quite interesting that from one point in space, every world and timeline is assigned a code, it's called Uni-Code. And they are people managing the place. Sure, I could blindly scop

around different, alternative worlds myself and it'd be fun messing with the current story there a little too much, on accident of course~, but there is time for that later, I ought to find him first. Top priority. Someone, whose name is too unimportant to remember once traded his life for an inter-universal-map, an IUM, showing the brief sectors different universes are separated in. Smaller worlds and timelines branch out from the original universes or ideas they are based on, the map looks like a vast system of tree roots, yet it's clearly not precise enough to pin point a person. But in the middle of those networks is the place with the managing people I mentioned before. Yet, even if I simply burst in, without some prior thought I won't get any of the result I desire, even with violence~

I start thinking, floating in a circle just because I want to. My answer has to involve a random generated Uni-Code, he could be anywhere, except the Void. The Uni-Code randomizer is clinging and forming on the original origin of the person using it. 98% of all life in the universes is born into a distinguished timeline within an AU, such as him. That is the leading point I am willing to go off.

"Let's see", I mumble to myself as I take out the IUM from my inner storage within the form I call body. I quickly check if everything is still intact and readable. Of course, it is. Everything inside the Void is perfectly sealed and stored~
Thinking about my one, current main objective of finding him, I look at the codes and which kind of universes they're connected with, my eyes strolling over many different kinds, trying to find the specific direction needed to pin point an area, and much energy would be needed to get there as fast as possible. Really, I can't let him waiting, the destruction will be so much fun~
Surprisingly, I take quite a while and come across some really weird stuff:
"Nothing- not the right kinds- this is an original universe- again, nothing- those are tentical monster-" ...DEAR DEPTHS OF NOTHINGNESS WHAT KIND OF SHIT IS THIS- WHO IN THE IN TNE RIGHT MIND CREATED THIS?!

I get a little flustered at my outburst, even though literally no one could have seen me losing my composure. I clear my throat to a non-existent audience and tell myself to shut up. I continue gazing over the map in complete horror... fucking Christ, why are some things even existing, they are almost worse than me, morally of course. I am and remain undefeated. I swear those are the next things I'm coming for, with no mercy. They'll be wiped out for good. They should be glad I have other plans.

My murderous thoughts get interrupted as my eyes flinch over the universe-branch I am looking for. Okay, first part of the code acquired. I can console with someone at the managing place over more details to pick out the exact location. I am 100% sure he is at his home. It only makes sense for the randomizer. Now, what was that managing place again? I haven't been there in forever; with him I never had a reason to. I just remember that extremely overpowered curse that is over this part of the IUM where magic is simply not possible, even if you're an outsider with magic in your possession. Maybe I'll find out why when I get there, but this god damn curse makes me vulnerable. Perhaps I should get some information about the place first before barging in like the storm that I am~
I use the interactive feature of the IUM and look closer. It's like a giant floating island with smaller, also floating islands around it, forming a circle. The city's name is 'Valenére', and apparently, it's middle contains all sorts of portals, reaching the bottom of the world far into the endless sky, shattered around on clouds and floating rocks, all connected with bridges. It looks fancy. Also, I'm not gonna lie that could be useful, even for the future~ With a bit of force from the back of my head, I turn my whole attention to the city and read through the descriptions.

I jolt a laugher as I read, laughing at the pathetic text. Well, I'll be damn. That's so utterly annoying and practically begs for me to be absolutely chaotic, I'll gladly embrace that~. Only "good" people, with low to no body count and only whom fighting for the safety of the multiverse are granted access. So~ all of my dearest enemies will be in there with me. The

thought is thrilling me to an extent of excitement I haven't had in quite a while. I mean- sure, I can see where they are coming from, I guess it's an important place where you can go literally anywhere in the entirety of all universes as you plead, and beings with malicious intent could go on a rampage~ I am not talking about me of course, I am way past destroying everything- that'd be boring, yet the thought progress in amusing me. Don't get me wrong, their policy utterly disgusting me If I'm honest, if my body could, I would vomit. It's clear that I'm not the exactly best person- actually, more like the opposite. Official are wanting me dead, 'hero's try to hunt me down for fame and more and more I gotta fight my way to get anything. But so far, no one was able to match me power~ even though the last one had some good moves, maybe 100 years of experience more and I would have had to run away~ I didn't like him getting attacked though, that caused this mess I am in. So yeah. I'm very often searching for fights and I don't really hesitate to attack others, him sometimes being the only person holding me back for years, which I have got used to at some point- maybe he had a 'good influence' on me or whatever. I quite enjoy his peaceful company, he' like a so called 'family' I never got to experience~ I also think that I can be very aggressive towards certain people, especially people who have an overdose of a 'know-it-all'-manner, and rich- rude people too, but others as well. Officials and 'hero's, yes, exactly. I can't stand them a single bit. So, all in all- while traveling around I assume I'm like at least 50% of the time pretty darn evil, there are some other things which I don't really want to mention to myself. Nope, not today, and probably not any time soon. I assume. I've been existing for too long, surely nothing really can surprise me anymore. Pff- and I say that. Surely, I'll get a surprise in the very near future, just as Karma begs it. But away from my personal life and back to the city on floating rocks. I don't really have a choice I guess; this could probably be the eas- no- it IS the easiest and the less tedious way to find him- I should give it a shot and go there. What is the worst that could happen anyway? Well, to be honest many things come into my mind which I actually don't want to be happening. I divert IUM to the local city map into a hologram- and wow it actually

worked. Wow. Technology can be impressive sometimes.
..God, I sound like a what young kids call 'Boomer'- I'm getting old. Literally.
I look at it and make some plans in my head. My backup plans to my backup plan. A few seem to work, other less. eh- it's fine. After a while I come up with a pretty simple, but good sounding plan:

I'll sneak in at night- which shouldn't be much a problem- as the day-night cycle in active in that region and there seem to be many well spots to hide, going by the detailed map. Then I'll hopefully be able enter the main-building successfully as well as undetected- If not- well violence is an option~ Anyways, after I have entered the building, all I need to do is to try to find the right portal. Seems a little bit too easy for my experience but why not try it out. Like I said violence is an option- I don't need to rely on magic to be dangerous~

I safe the location of the portal-rooms within my protentional brain and look at the time. Well- not ,my' current time. Time doesn't exist in the void- but the time I'm looking at is the time of the place I want to visit. It's 3pm in Valenére huh? That's way too early to set myself into motion- what a shame. And since it is too early, I just set an alarm to 11pm, and to waste the rest of the time I need to wait causally decide to sleep a bit. Basic time skip. Too much stress again, I'm just trying to live peaceful as I'm doing not so peaceful things, and then this Armature steps in and tears him and me apart- stupid piece of shit, I hope you enjoy rotting in hell like the rest of you stupid, egoistic, weak people. But who doesn't like a good and long nap?

Time passes as I drift off into sleep: a recovery state. That is until it is time to get up again: the hardest part of sleeping. "A-", I startle as my alarm is going off, making me loose balance and falling a few meters into nothing. Which is not the worst as everything here is nothing. But really-
NO ONE SAW THAT. I SWEAR TO THE DEEPEST DEPTHS OF HELL-
The void is endless- at least none of the figures being able to

freely go in and out the void as they please ever found an end. Well, that's also a thing I COULD do if I wanted, but, I'm kind of too lazy for it, it's really uneventful, so no. I blink a few times before finding balance again, finding myself floating. Why is this always happening to me again? Is this Karma? Just because I'm messing with all kind of universes for fun? I mean I only do it with Au's that are a pain for the eye sight.
But HEY- I can't say that I'm tired, that's fine, I guess. I yawn loudly and stretch (just some habits I adopted from humans9 and look at the time. 11:01pm. Perfect. I stretch once again and decide to not lose any of my sweet, important time, so I open the portal to Valenére and make my way through.

.
The portal behind me closes, my feet standing on manmade stone bricks. And to my ABSOLUTE LUCK- comedy gold, I know, I'm standing on open field, good visible for everyone, which made me stress a tiny little bit since my plan hasn't even started yet and it's really too early to fail, so I just quickly rush behind the first wall I manage to spot, hiding inside of the shadows. Annoying. Fate is testing me. Oh, how exciting~
Well, that's the positive side of not being the tallest being in the worlds, even though maybe I could be, I haven't tested it out yet, usually I am comfortable at 1,65cm. It's easier not to get noticed when you don't want to. Then I spy around the edge, just to see two guards walking by, and I see the sarcasm in that. Oh wow, turns out that they're guard everywhere, legit: everywhere- didn't expect this place to be guarded *that* heavily. I'm not sure if should dislike or love that.
But wait- that means I moved away in perfect time- One second later and they would have caught me. I am just that good~
I, again, spy above the wall. There is the main street, leading directly to the middle, just like on the map. All I need to do is to follow that street to the middle, where a tower-like building- is located. And I can't see its roof. Damn, this is what you can call a tall tower. Beside the streets are a lot of plants, beautifully placed in small gardens in symmetrical fashion, including weirdly grayish trees. I can use their intertwining crow structure to my advantage. Also again, why are there so many guards? It's quite annoying.

I sigh and recollect my reasons. Remember, there are portals there that can take you literally anywhere- and I mean, anywhere everywhere. So of course, this place sure is kind of important. BUT STILL, THAT'S NOT AN EXCUSE-
I'm basically breaking in- but I do have 'jail-outbreak-vibes'. I wonder why.

Also, I probably should get going now- I don't have the whole night to wonder about useless things. I quietly rush with immense tempo a few meters next to the street, in between the plants, then I jump upon the top of the trees on the way to the main building- so it's more like fast jumping as soundless as I can from tree to tree. Easy~ Luckily those trees are really stable, so I'm able to move surprisingly quiet. That's good for me, I'm not complaining~ After some intense and epic jumps (just kidding), I've been surprisingly stressed and very excited the entire time, I arrive at the main building, and damn, it's huge, I probably said that more than 3 times already, but the statement remains true. Now, how do I get in there the best is the question. I was too lazy to think that through entirely. Yet, entrance is guarded by two guards. Sort of disappointing in contrast to all of them walking down the streets, really. I expected more. Gotta get rid of them before they spot me and ring the alarm. Then everything would be ruined. The thought alone makes my hand flinch to my pocket, where my weapon resigns. Not because I'd be in trouble- I'm sure I would be able to get through them with violence, if I used full power- which would be of need in a 'no-magic-zone'. No. The sheer disappointment in myself would ruin me for eternity. And that is a long time. Also, the catch is that I quickly lose control over myself if I go on full blast, but that is not as bad. In total, that happened a few times already- wasn't too good. Accidentally erased a few whole branches of innocent universes... Yeah- I definitely need another way.

After moments of planning, I take an old, but good(*?*) technique. I take my time and quietly teleport off the tree and start my search for a rock. Soon after I find a fist big rock. Perfect. I inhale, silently, and throw the rock as far away from me as I physically can without breaking a wall, letting the rock

make noises as it hit the ground. And guess what- it worked! The guards were distracted, looking at the way my rock landed. And of course- I immediately took my chance, creep up from the behind and knock one of the two out by ramming his head heavily into the wall. Surely, he'll be a-okay. The guards wear helmets so I had to hit him stronger, but after that action I'm pretty sure he passed out. HE's still fine, I promise. I look up. The other guard just stands there in complete shock, he wasn't expecting anything to happen at all tonight. Heh- idiot. Before he has the opportunity to make any sound or even hit the alarm, I also knock him down by punching him in the face, knocking him to the ground and hitting him, also kicking him multiple times as well- just for entertainment.
"You guys and your stupid curse and rules." I mumble my frustrations, but soon let it go.

I look at the passed-out guards for a few moments and mentally pat my own shoulder- well done! That went well. I pick up the body of the first and tear him out of the view. I did the same with the second one.

Now there is nothing in my way to enter the main building.

4| Overbearing

Indonesia's POV

Before reaching the guy, I decide to walk around the house a bit longer. Our house isn't that big, but it isn't small either. Perfectly sized for us three- I mean me, Malay and Phil. I go grab a pen, some papers and then quietly stand with some them in the door frame to just, observe him. The others him bandaged already, but his clothing is in need of being washed. Badly... The strange, yet mysterious person looks carefully around the room and pulling the blanket Poland had given them closer, warping it around them, seemingly liking it? I mean, that's not bad- right? Seeing that nothing will change, I walk over with loud steps to alert him. After mustering up some courage I sit down beside him. I don't know but... this feels exciting. He doesn't feel dangerous at all! Still, I wonder how he feels, and how strong the pain is. I watch as he stares at the empty, white papers in my hands, seemingly interested. Malay draws sometimes when he isn't streaming, which is why we have so much paper. Hesitantly, I hand him one. Shortly afterwards, he takes one of the pencils lying next to the papers and writes something. I specifically brought a pen, but sure. Why not? What is he writing? Has he even enough strength to do so?! I mean... the wound! I haven't seen it, but the poncho is deep red!! As I silently panic, he hands me the paper.
'It looks bad for him. He'll die.'
"Don't say that!" I bite my tongue in retaliation and look at it, recognizing instantly the letters he wrote.

-*Thanks for letting me stay* - it reads. I automatically smile. How polite! I look up in his in shadows covered face. I've never seen something like this before!
"So... uh, you're mute, right?" I carefully make sure, and get nodding as an answer. Huh... oh well!

"Ah, alright. What's your name?" After my question, he scribbles on the paper once again.
-I don't remember having one, I'm fine with anything that sounds rather okay to be called, it really depends on what you want to call me. -
Huh?? Not only mute, but also amnesia?! This poor man! Has to go through everything at once!
"I see, uhm. I'll think of something, okay? Nice to meet you."

He smiles at me, then putting the paper and pencil back on the table next to the couch. Seeing him smile, nerves in my brain active. Woah, what a genuine smile! I feel my cheeks warming up. Being only able to sense emotions from his body language and mouth increases the meaning of every move, and that was a really, REALLY beautiful, I MEAN KIND, smile. Jeez, how cringe, I just met him.
'And now you're turning into a Simp.'
"No I'm not!"
'You're such a little kid!'
"I am VERY old!" his smile makes my stomach feel warm and comfortable. I continue to look at the man in awe. Surely, he is a very nice and kind person! He really seems like one. I wonder why they're hiding their face? I can't be that bad! As I realize me being overly curious to someone's privacy again, I feel myself blushing a bit harder, out of embarrassment. I groaned, calming down a bit with deep breaths and stand up again.
"Do you want something to drink? You must have lost quite some... blood." I ask politely. The man looks down his chest before nodding. I strictly walk out the room and get a water bottle, walking back to the living room afterwards. Our guest is still on the couch. I shouldn't do that, yet, I have the urge to prank him, like I prank many of my friends. I really shouldn't do that- but I always make bad life choices, this shouldn't be worse. With the conclusion I decided to sneak up on him.
'Not another prank!'
"It's not hurting anyone."
'You are SO immature'

"What cha doing 'Mate'?" I ask, loud and suddenly. The person I tried to scare flinches violently and turns his head in surprise around to me. Like before, I can't really see his eyes or anything of

his face above his mouth, but yeah, it's easy to tell that he is in shock. That makes me giggle, yet I sort of already regret my actions. Poor man, I should apologize. I inhale and look at him. He turns his head away, probably embarrassed. Yet, there is something radiating around the room. No wait- that's not what embarrassment from the others feel like. Did I... do something wrong? Instant of reaching my goal with a simple joke he actually seems scared, nervous, even shaking a little. OH- does he has PTSD or anything?! Shit, I didn't want that- Phil is going to kill me if he doesn't calm down!!
'I told you!'
"You're not helping!"
Oh god, this is so awkward, why in the world did I think I'd be a good idea to play a prank on a stranger?! A STRANGER! Not knowing what to do next, I decide to slowly sit beside him. He had his hand placed next to him for supporting his sitting position. My brain basically smokes from the sudden overworking through information. What does me calm down? What would calm me down that could calm HIM down in a situation like that?! My eyes keep darting at the hand, my not being able to look him in the face out of embarrassment and also shame. Malay always pats my hand to calm me down, and Phil hugs me.
Well, I cannot hug a stranger obliviously, yet the hand-thing would also be weird. But doing nothing won't help either!!
Why is this situation so stupid?!
'Because you made it stupid!'
"That was a rhetorical question!"
With lighting speed I wage my options and then out of reflex I laying my hand his- turning my head as far away as possible. I am just making things worse, aren't I? I'm usually pretty good at that. As I await any type of reaction, I silently pray not to make things even worse, accidentally squeezing it. His hand is warm- like- really warm- feels like a heater. There is just so much energy.
Immediately, my shoulders relax with that warm hand of his- even though he is the one supposed to be calming down, not me. But it is nice, I cannot deny, and he doesn't really do anything against it... Oh god this is embarrassing, but also so nice! A welcoming, nice feeling appears inside me, making itself wide, making me smile. I closed my eyes, still having my head as far away as possible.

It must be so weird for him **I am so sorry**-

'Are you really?'
"YES!"

I don't know how much time of pure awkwardness passes until the hand underneath mine slowly starts shifting away, trying to get away without disturbing me too much. This just explodes the level of awkwardness. And now I feel even dumber. OH MY GOD I BEHAVE LIKE AN IDIOT.
'FINALLY!'
"SHUT UP!"
The hell is supposed to think of me?! Then, the hand and its warmth are gone and I feel eyes boring into my back. Ah shit, ah shit. They'll never want to be near me ever again, I am so stupid. So, I open my eyes quite carefully and slowly turn my head, seeing the guy glaring at me, in return I look back. The glares soon were mashed up into an unsaid staring contest, getting more and more intense. I tried to imagine where exactly his eyes would be and keep looking at him - my mind going blank. His visible skin is a bleached dark blue with some inconsistencies. Like they were painted on, quite beautiful. They're lighter pigments and darker, so interesting! I could keep staring at them for so long! Uh- that'd be rude, wouldn't it? I wouldn't want to be rude once more. The staring contest hold on for some time, as millions of questions rotate in my head. That is, until...

...someone clears their throat from not so far away. Our 'eye contact' breaks and the guest rubs his other hand against the one I previously held, now turning his head around to the source of the voice. So do I. As we both turn our heads, Malay and Phil stand at the door frame, who were standing a few meters away from us. Phil looks slightly confused from one to the other while Mal smirks at us. I didn't dare to look him in the eyes. I'm probably still red in the face. I wish to get out of here, but I know I can't, so I just need to deal with the embarrassing situation. I sigh quietly and lean back, trying to calm my very fast beating heart as I watch the situation between my friends and the stranger unfold.

"So, this is our guest- "Phil starts and his eyes widen. Oh yeah, my friend, I had the same reaction as I saw him for the first time. "God! Are you okay?! What happened?! Malay, get the med kid!"

"Calm down, he has been cared for by Ame and the others, his cloth is just still blood stained." I reply before the situation gets out of hand again. Mal is now also shocked, but remains in place and nods first, holding onto Phil just in case. The Pilipino blinks heavily and takes a good second before he is able to respond.
"I- I see. I'm Philippines, call me Phil- nice to meet you." Phil says, offering a handshake. My 'Mate' -I decided to call him that for now, I am really bad with names- hesitates, and then shakes Phils hand. Is it only my imagination or is he still shaking... I wonder if it is still from the shock or from blood loos- Oh! I forgot with water!! He didn't drink it since... since we- basically-
....

AH ALLAH, I JUST HELD HANDS WITH A STRANGER- AND I MADE THE FIRST MOVE TOO?!

How did I not realize this oblivious fact sooner??
'BECAUSE- '
"I don't want to hear it!"
I press my teeth together, trying not to be suspicious to the rest of the group and not turn even more into a tomato. This is the worse evening ever! I'm just making a fool of myself! In front of the first stranger in ages!!
Yet, back to the question... Didn't it help? I mean, he seems pretty calm now?? Well except for the shaking- Or is he still just this shocked? I guess I will never know. My mind goes back to the mysterious hood. He doesn't show his face, it's so fascinating! I want to know! Aren't you intrigued too, brain?
'...perhaps, a little.'
We aren't dangerous or anything- or maybe he is very introverted? I narrow my eyes while I think a lot of different thoughts about this man. I didn't pay much attention to the others, focusing more on the strangers' expressions. Meanwhile, Mal introduces himself, loud as always, waving happily at him. My 'Mate' wavs a little back, slightly smiling at Malay's silly behavior. My mouth curls into a soft grin as well, God, I could stare at this smile for hours- wait what. Indonesia- get yourself together. You've embarrassed yourself enough today! You are just thinking about him this much because

you just met him and he is new! Don't daydream- you are overreacting like, TOTALLY-
.
.
Then, in my moment of weakness, I get thrown off the couch.

"A FUCK!"
'Hah, deserved.' I land with my back on the ground, my leg dangling in the air, hearing quiet chuckles from Phil. I look up to Malays expression: cold as ice. He had pushed me.
"-what the heck?!"
"Dude- you were staring. Like, really creepily staring. That's rude and you know it!" Mal answers coldly. Al Allah, man-
"But that's not a reason to throw me of the goddamn couch!"
"Well! He was visibly uncomfortable with you staring at him! Also! You weren't responsive at all! Be respectful" Mal argues and gives me another death-stare. Oh- I didn't even really realize I was starring... I need to work on that- I feel bad. And I just keep on embarrassing myself today how is that even possible?! I get angry at myself, then quickly look at my 'Mate' and realize Malaysia is very right; He looks very, no extremely uncomfortable. So, he really is introverted.
"Sorry-" I mumble with a low voice.
"Indo, can you at least tell us why he is so quiet- he didn't speak one word the entire time-" Phil asks me, changing the topic- he's trying his very best. I stand up from the ground and fall back on the couch to explain the information I've gathered, trying to behave normal again.

"Well-"

The 'Mate's POV

I feel my heart beating fast and heavy against chest, ringing in my ears. Panic... and something else. Why had he been so close?! Does he know who I am?! I need to calm, but it's difficult- at least Phil and Malay are pretty nice so far. Not like last time we met... Phil and the others used to beat me up verbally and sometimes physically all the time. ANYWAYS- NONE OTHER THAN ***INDONESIA*** *CAUSALLY 'HELD' MY HAND KEEPS STARING AT ME and it's creeping me out- very uncomfortable. I still feel like he's suspecting something or is that even possible?*

I take a deep breath, decide to ignore it for now and focus on the things that happen around me again- I should stop shaking as well probably, but I'm just feeling so dizzy. I tiredly look around the room and remember the water bottle he brought before scaring me. It was terrifying having him this close to my face. I reach out to the wet gold and Indo notices, handing it to me as he explains to the other how I am 'mute'. Too funny. They also respect my privacy by me hiding my face from them- which is really nice. Good. Perfect, even. Everything is ok so far, like I already said it all could have gone so way worse.

"Mm- I understand." *Malay starts, turns around and points to the papers, us looking there. The papers? Indo brought them for me to write. Malay still has those mood swings I see, similar to America: First over excited- then throwing Indo off the couch and now that?*
Malay claps, grinning wide into the round of people inside the living room.
"If we can't understand sign language we need to communicate somehow-*" He lays his hand on the papers on the nearby table, directly in front and reachable for me.*
"-because you seem like a very nice person. Indo did a great job at that already!" *Mal finished his sentence, Phil nodded in agreement. Indo smiles, rubbing his head. I can feel his embarrassment.*
"A-A- It was nothing." *he replies. I can't help but smile too. Finally, someone here marks me as 'nice' who hated me before. Overall, it's really wholesome- until my stomach decides to ruin everything and starts to growl as a terrible hunger is kicking in, deflating me even more. I carefully hold my stomach, trying not to press too much against the opened scar. Still weird how technology improved to make stitching easier. But right- I haven't eaten in few days and it's getting noticeable. I've always been tall and skinny, I don't have much fat tissue to live on, so I need to eat. Especially since I need to recover now.*

"...Are you hungry?" *Phil asks, after a moment of silence. I nod, feeling kind of bad- if they agree I will just take the food they have- and it doesn't quiet feel right. Or is that part of my plan too? I suddenly am not sure about my intentions anymore. That's why she always went in town alone getting food when we had no money- because I felt bad for the persons we stole from. This is around the same problem.*
"Great, me too*" -Indo says, suddenly being death-serious. Why does everyone mood switch so fast?? Was that already like this before I left?*

Honestly, I have no Idea. Phil silently switches looks between us. Then Mal also hops in our 'hole of hunger'
"Same-"
"Pff-" *Phil starts to giggle a bit, the sighs.*
"-let's make a second dinner then, but ya'all are helping." *he turns around and makes his way to the kitchen in a very fake-serious manner. Malay didn't even wait a moment and sprints after him to the cooking room. Indo chuckles.*
"Uh- sorry for being so incredibly awkward and touchy, didn't mean to do that. Come one- let's follow before there isn't anything left for us. Do... you need help walking?" *he jokes and stands up. In return I nod and carefully get up. As I start walking, I stop as Indo doesn't follow me- still standing by the couch. I turn around to him with a questioning, almost worried expression.*
"And I, uh, sorry for scaring you. I didn't know you got PTSD or something like that. I am used to playing pranks on everyone but I really don't mean any harm." *to my surprise, Indonesia apologizes- actively avoiding eye contact out of shame. I watch him for a moment, as something explodes in me. Something warm. A warm feeling. Wow... He actually apologized to me. Oh damn. Like, I know he doesn't know who I am and what this means to me but the fact alone-*
I felt like tearing up- this hit me right in the soul. But in a good way, I guess.
"Uh... pal...?" *Indo voice was shaking a little and he carefully moved towards me while I am having my little moment. I can't really describe how it feel to get an apology from HIM- after EVERYTHING. Even though I should be the one apologizing to him. I lift my eyes a little and see a worried Indonesia in front of me. I seriously debate with myself if I should keep my distance and how far, yet there is the feeling of welcomeness. The suddenly urge to hug him pierces through my body. Oh, that would be weird. I'm just a 'stranger' after all. During the further hesitation I just stand there frozen, a little overwhelmed. Eventually the urge wins and even if I decided to talk now, my words would be stuck in my throat. In attempt to communicated speechless I instant take a few quick steps over to him (my stomach protesting in much pain) and I knee down to his height, since Indo is a rather small person. I pull him into a tight hug. The Asian was definitely very, very surprised, but hugged back after a second of hesitation himself. The hug felt magical- like two enemies making peace...*

The brief moment of peace was ruined for me as the harsh reality of the situation kicked back in, which broke my heart further than my already broken, messed up soul is. He apologized as he did not know me. He was only being polite. He doesn't even know who he really apologized to! I tighten my grip around Indo, beginning to shake again, my emotional stability vanishing like smoke in the wind. Not that it was stable from the beginning. It's eating me away from the inside, I feel so hollow, so alone. A loneliness even she couldn't cure. I grab stronger onto the smaller person, trying to keep quiet and not start weeping as me vision blurs. I just want to say 'I'm so sorry', yet my throat is keeping itself shut instant. without the emotional stability- negative, depressing thoughts flood my brain again. I hear my own voice ringing in my head.
He wouldn't have apologized if he knew who you are.
He doesn't mean it.
He still hates you.
He will always hate you.
Stop giving yourself hope.
There is no happy ending.
You're pathetic.
Don't trust him being nice- it will get back to you. Like last time.

That was too much for me. Everything just built up over the years. She tried helping and she really helped- yet I never got to let everything out from the past years. I always pushed myself to the maximum- making me pushing all weakness away- becoming a monster. In my determination of succeeding from what had been done to me, I actually did worse things than here, in this world. But they out there didn't mean anything to me. Then why do those people here do? I should be hating them more than everything. Then why is it coming out again now? At this exact place and time? In my weakness of not understanding what exactly is happening to my emotions, my brain feels heavy, it hurts. I couldn't hold the tears back anymore, and I start sobbing. At least she isn't seeing me like this. She shouldn't see me like this.
As I rest my actively burning head on his shoulder, Indos radiating shock sinks into my nerves. It was a sudden chance of emotion, sure. And suddenly, they change again. From grief into anger. I clench my teeth. It's his fault. Everything is his fault! I need to get away!
In sudden need for space I do as I said, I push the Indonesian with all my strength away- maybe a bit too much strength as the man tumbles a few steps before he falls. Oh no, no, no, I didn't want him to get hurt. I

am as dangerous as before! The thought pressed on my shoulders more and I back away in the next corner, sitting on the ground, pulling me knees up to my chest and burry me head in my knees- not seeing any light at the end of the tunnel. Not long after I hear footsteps, then soft gasping- I assume Phil and Malay- or only one of them wanted to check on us- and then finding this state. I must look so stupid right now... God I hate this feeling. I try keeping my noise down with fast, light breathing- trying to understand the talking- not daring to look up. My breathing didn't work though because I didn't really understand anything- but the loud noises remembered me at my family yelling at each other after I got hit.
It made things worse.

"Hey." I then hear someone whisper softly. I inhale and hold my breath to listen.
"Let's leave the room, ok?" *the calming voice I now identify as Philippines says. That should help, I think. Not sure if in Phils company though. Regardless, I nod and Phil helps me up. I keep my head low to not reveal myself. We leave the living room and go into the bathroom. I hadn't dared to look at Phil and I even more didn't dare to look in the mirror. I just down on the closed seat of the toilet as Phil hands me a towel I could wipe my tears away with, keeping some distance. Being out of the heavy tension with Indonesia already calmed me a bit, and I welcome the help. Phil then starts talking once more, his voice still soft and calming. Woah.*
"Whatever Indo did this time, I am so sorry that you experienced that trauma again- whatever trauma you had and what caused the memory to come back, but I promise it isn't always like that here. And I am sure Indo didn't mean to do that." *he speaks. If you only knew, Phil. If you only knew. Yet, I know it's not directly Indos fault. It's all my fault. From the beginning on. And it will always be my fault. The 'trauma' was just the consequences of my actions. My head, now feeling was denser from the crying, which I still wasn't completely done with, makes me feel dizzy again. The abrupt moments from breathing hurt my wound so much. I thought it was okay but I think I'm about to pass out again. I should signal to Phil that I need to lay down somewhere. I look around the room, trying to find something to write on, and find nothing. This is a bathroom, Idiot. Of course, nothing is here. I was glad not needing to talk right now, even though my mind wanted to say thousands of words at once.*

"Can you give us another chance, maybe? I made rice and heated some soup for you to eat since it's fast and a warm meal. Malay also helped me cleaning the room you can stay in for the night. How about we stay here until you calm a bit, you go eat something and just rest until tomorrow? You might need to stay in bed a few days." *Phil softly continues talking after a while as my breaths get deeper and less shaky. This... is helping. Yet, my hands still shaking, I reach out for Phils hand- and take it. My heart beats loud in my chest, but I need to communicate a few words before my throat explodes in talking.*
"My fault. Don't blame yourself. It's a good idea." I slowly write short and understandable words in his palm. Luckily, he seemed to understand my writing and sighs in relieve, smiling a little.
"Oh, good. Thank you. Are you feeling a bit better? You really should drink something too." *he asks and I nod, well knowing how awkward everything will be for the next while inside this house hold. Let's see for how long.*
Also I can't decide if all of this is good for my mental health or not.
I mentally sigh and get up.

Me and Phil walk to the kitchen. Indo and Malay are already there, silently at the table, not looking at each other but simply staring on the plate. Malay looks a little worried at me, a tiny bit of guilt in his eyes and Indo didn't even dare to look at me at all, his head hanging down- making me feel guilty too. I absolutely hate this mood. Phil and I settles and we start eating.

Around 20 minutes pass and we are still at the table. I chucked an entire 1.5L bottle of water and I already feel better. Though I have to eat very slowly so I wouldn't vomit the food. Refeeding syndrome. Right now, I'd consider my current mental state to be a little more stable again, but it still decreases more as usual, meaning it's easier to break down, which isn't good. Also, I haven't had rice in ages- so it is pretty nice. Even though I eat pretty slow, I ate a lot, I have to admit, even the others noticed.
"Oh damn. Dude, are my cooking skills that good or for how long haven't you eaten anything?" *Phil jokes, trying to better the mood a bit, looking impressed as I fill my 3rd plate full to the brim with rice. I'm just so hungry- also need to fill some holes in my chest with food anyways. I put my spoon aside and write an answer:*
'Yeah sorry- I haven't eaten in the past few days' I write- handing the

paper to Phil.
"Oh- well- then take as much as you like-" *Phil replies as he reads, raising his eyebrows a little.*
"What did he write?" *Mal asks, curious, yet very quiet from across the table.*
"He wrote that he hasn't eaten at all for a few days." *Phil explains. My eyes wander to Indo and Malay, who's eyes widen quite a bit. I gulp, sort of knowing what would come next.*

"He hasn't eaten in days?? Mate, are you okay?!-" *Indo asks me- worried. Okay, I know I had a mental breakdown like 25 minutes ago but you can stop worrying now. I don't like all the attention. The storm broke off and everything returned to- well 'normal'.*
"Tell me right now- what was the last thing you ate?" *Mal questions, leaning over the table towards me, narrowing his eyes as he was shut by Phil.*
"You can't just ask someone this question-"
"Well, why not?"
"It's rude you know-"
"And kind of creepy as well, imagine a stranger going to you asking 'HEY Dude what was the last thing you ate??'" *Indo comments, copying Malays voice at the second part of the sentence- but in bad.*
"I don't sound like this!" Mal complains.
"You do." *Phil replies, making Mal fake-gasp. And it doesn't stop there. To be honest, it's quite hilarious yet also dumb to see them fight. I couldn't help it, so I put my hand in front of my mouth and start to chuckle tiredly. All three turns silent in seconds and looked at me as they heard me giggle. Oh shit- I need to save myself immediately! I quickly write an excuse.*

'Just because I'm mute doesn't mean I can't laugh or make anything that has to do with noises-' I write, hoping they would buy it because I have actually no idea what's like to be mute, while trying to hold my composure since I don't want to be rude. Malay also started to giggle after he read my 'words' and I was relieved he was buying it. In the end: we all were sort of vibing. A good finish after those negative aspects from before... at least for now.
After that, as well as finishing to eat, the others cleaned the dishes and told me to just rest. I really need that. It's still a little scary to be in their home. I try to not let my nervousness show as the trio starts talking to

each other and me, telling me stories from their life with the other countries like they didn't just meet me an hour ago- and indirectly I got told what I missed out in the past time. Yet, deep down I still feel like crying, but it isn't as bad as before I'd say. They... are so friendly. This concept is totally alien to me. I'm sure if I showed up as 'myself' they wouldn't treat me like this. I decide to shake my worries off and at least act happy for now.

Afterwards we all sit on in the living room. Mal leans over the back of couch whilst I sit comfortable on it, a big pillow beside me. I have a few water bottles and papers next to me, as well as a pillow for my head and oh wow it's so soft, I feel like sitting on a cloud! I've done that before. The only thing that is making me slightly uncomfortable is Indo sitting next to me. Phil sits on the opposite side of the room in an armchair. They were currently telling me something about the USA having an 'argument' with Russia. Those totally gay men I swear to God. They have been for so long. Ame openly shows it since the Soviet Union had died, and Russia is apparently still not wanting to admit it. Kind of glad I haven't missed the wedding yet (Just Kidding). But over all- I missed quite a lot of things, haven't I? But I can't complain. I had good years too, peaceful once where I was appreciated for who I really was... next to being a monster, of course. Meanwhile, I decided to share a short story as well, one where me and her had fun time. It's a reasonable story that could have happened in this non-magical AU as well. And since they believe that I don't talk I have to write it down. ***Great.***

I finally finish to write and read over it again to fix some spelling mistakes, as there suddenly is a soft weight on my shoulder. I pause for a moment. What's that? A pillow? But on my shoulder? The talking from Mal and Phil abruptly stops too. Very curious and also nervous, I slowly turn my head and see... Indo, seemingly SLEEPING ON MY SHOULDER. I swear my heart stopped beating and I was afraid to get another panic attack for a second. Oh my God. H-HOW DID THAT HAPPEN?! I slowly start to panic, absolutely freezing in place. Not good! Not good! NOT GOOD! I try to calm myself down, but it shows little affect. Phil seems to have nothing to do and legit 'awes' over the situation whilst Malay feels my panic state and pats my head, or more like my hood, trying to help me calm. I feel my cheeks heating up. This is... kind of embarrassing. I take deep breaths and regain self-control. I simply sit there, very stiff, and let it happen, knowing that I can't really

do anything stop it. It just would be so unbelievingly awkward if Indo woke up now. But otherwise, I could relax more... my stomach hurts really bad being stiff like that. Thank God the others cannot see my face this right now, would have died out of embarrassment probably. And not only because of embarrassment- also because of who I am- they'd kick me out and leave me to die with that wound. Or am I'm getting just overly paranoid? Are they still the same as in the past? I throw a side-eye to the sleeping Indonesia and despite the situation, something warm bubbles up inside me, seeing him sleep so peacefully. Indo sure is... No. Don't think that. I am going to hate myself if I ever finish that thought. Mal stops patting me, ripping me out of my thoughts.

"Are you feeling alright? Or is he too much for you?"
"..."
"Uh- hold on for a second!" *he walks over to a closet at the wall and pulls a big- fluffy looking blanket out. He walks back to us and carefully warps the blanket around me and Indo, since I'm not really able to move in my state of frozen shock. I am not used to this! While I was still busy with internally hating myself over everything and the things I'm going through at the moment, Phil also stands up and hands me another water bottles. Wait, this one wasn't there before. Where the hell did he pull that from? His ass?*

"Sorry about Indo, he is a walking man-child. And uh- don't get me wrong- yet you don't seem like you want to wake him. Neither does any of us. So, I guess you'll stay on the couch for the night. Again, I am so sorry, I promise the bed in the guest bedroom is much more comfortable than being a pillow yourself." *Phil says, smiling apologetic at the end and I finally excepted my fate for the night, trying to relax my muscles. That leaves me with less pain. I sigh heavily and nod slightly. I hear a quick and quiet* "good night" *from Malaysia, then they turn off the lights and move upstairs to their own bedrooms, leaving me in pure darkness. Finally, I let the wave of exhaustion wash over me. I've been holding that off forever, the entire day. I went far above the point of passing out due to pure determination and fear, and now it's hitting me right in the guts. My eye lids get heavy as I rub my eyes- feeling the stress and pretty much everything sinking into my bones and they start hurting. Everything hurts. Letting it sink in and my mind giving up on dear life, I look at Indo again. He is barely visible in the dark. He his breathing is hearable, it is regular and deep, he sleeps so peacefully...*

on my shoulder. I take my time and think about him, I mean- I probably won't get much sleep tonight anyways aside from just passing out- so I have time, I guess.

So... After I had done this... I never really talked to him again. I didn't have a chance, too. Indo was pretty popular among the countries. And after my monstrous instincts showed up for the first time... Heh- well- guess I deserved it. As I re-view my life, a spark clears my mind for a second, trying to break me free from the old memories. Can I still use my flames? The beautifully, blue, ,'cursed' fire? My enemies like to call it 'Hells Flame' because it can burn everywhere. After I decided to travel around universes with her, she gave me this 'gift' and another life. My first life was the prize for it. There are side effects that came as I received the fire- positive ones and negative ones. I lift my right hand and do the usually thing I do to summon it.

... and, it works! A small, yet light glowing, light blue flame floats in my hand, lighting the room. The fire doesn't radiate heat to me though. I guess I just need to recover more, she isn't here to help me heal, after all. I was very relieving to know that I still could use that stuff. Then I remember that Indo is still lying next to me and quickly let the flame disappear. If they'd label me as 'monster' again if they knew? I sigh again and lean back, snuggling into the blanket. Not too comfortable but it has to work.
I then let my mind slide into oblivion and finally pass out. I hope that Indo will just go away until I wake up again. He is so clingy, I don't enjoy that.

5| Indo's peak childishness

Indonesia's POV

I feel myself gaining consciousness again- please no, I feel tired as hell. Yesterday's events were a little much for me I'll admit it, I am so wasted, and I didn't even drink. Except water!
I don't want to wake up yet. So, in conclusion, I simply let my eyes closed in hopes of drifting back to sleep again. It does work, until my brain decided to boot up for the day.
'Another day, another one where I don't get peace.'
"Morning to you too." I scramble my thoughts and get more awake. Now hang on a darn second. My current position, I'm sitting? Doesn't feel like my bed. Yeah, why would I sit in my bed when I can *lay* in it? My head is lying in a rather weird angle on something hard yet comfortable? My brain, doing its daily upgrades for what feels like hours, decides against working- meaning I'll need to figure out where I am myself, at best without much thinking. I internally sigh and open my eyes a bit. It's really light in the room, so I shut them in reaction again. How annoying.
But wait. This certainly isn't my bedroom... and I'm not in my bed.
'We aren't?' I slowly open my eyes again- just to get blended once more and wait until my vision is clear and used to the light conditions. My eyes wander around the room. Living room, huh? Did I fall asleep here yesterday? That's on me. Yesterday was so good and then so bad, but today is a new way to be optimistic! I promptly turn my head around, only to have that new found confidence crush. Huh?! No way! Looking up I see a passed out 'Mate' sitting next to me.
Why am I here?? Why are *WE* in this position?! I slept on the strangers shoulder the entire night?! Without feeling too uncomfortable?? My emotions are everywhere and it's too early in the morning to process them all at once. My cheeks heat up. I panic. The fuck am I blushing! I'M NOT GAY!
'Allah, you are embarrassing us again. Don't move and don't make it

oblivious.'
Wait. No- I'm just embarrassed. UGH. I shut my eyes as fast as possible- a part of me hoping this would all be a dream. In that silence I actually hear the calm breathing of the man beside me as well as the warmth radiating from him, just like from his hand yesterday. Is he a walking heater or something? This shit is hurting my brain. I am overthinking, I am not crushing on the first new person here in over 150 years, there is no way.
'Urghhhhhh'
As I wanted to move me head up, away from his shoulder, there is suddenly the presence of a weight on my head. I open, once again- carefully- one eye, and realize that his head had dropped onto mine by accident. He must be so drained from yesterday. He should definitely sleep longer, preferably in a bed! Yet I feel myself burning harder. Thank God the others aren't seeing this!! What is he doing with me?! Why me??
My silent screams stay unheard.
'Except for me.'
"No one's asking you"
My 'Mate' didn't hear them either and just continued to rest (as he should). I haven't been this emotional in decades ah Allah. But the warmth and light pressing, it actually... feels quite nice, so I don't do anything and just sit there, dumbfounded, slowly calming a bit. After some time, I gaze upon his face. Not that I see it, how are those shadows even realistic? His breath remains calm. It's way calmer than yesterday. I look around the room, already feeling bad again for the trouble I caused. And my heart beats even faster than it already does. He is asleep, but he seems so gentle and soft like this, it's quite mesmerizing. Shit, so much to the topic 'calm'. You are behaving like a creep again, Indonesia! I need to tell someone about this situation. Right now- before I do something **REALLY** stupid because of my overly excited panic or awkwardness or whatever you can call it. Now, how do I get out of this without waking him? I take a shaky breath and slowly reach for a pillow that could potentially replace me and slowly do the procedure. I hold my breath as I shift away from the man, and luckily, nothing changes. I exhale quietly in relieve. And it's still too early, I am not fully awake. I don't care if it is like 10am or something, it is too early! Thank God he isn't seeing me blushing. Okay so, what now? I need to go to the bathroom, yes. And then, I got to talk to someone

about this... mess. Yes. I know that I can talk with Phil about everything, I'm not saying that I can't talk to Mal- but I feel more comfortable to talk with Phil about that specific topic.

Philippines's POV

I lay half-awake in my bed, cuddling with my pillow. So warm! So comfy! This must be life's meaning! As I am enjoying myself, I get interrupted as someone knocks at my door. Huh? Who could that be, out of all residents of my house? I slowly open my eyes against my will and take a look at the time. My alarm says 7:30 AM. I growl and roll away from the side. Oh fuck, it's early also it is Sunday so who the fuck things it a good idea to bother me now?! I groan and sit up, rubbing my eyes as the tiredness takes hold of me again. Whoever this is has hopefully a good reason. I stare at the door for someone to open it, yet nothing happens. I sigh.
"Come in?" I half-heartedly yell, and with surprise I see a really emotional Indo opening the door. He is not crying or anything, but it's visible that he is kind of distraught. Oh, wait. I think I already know what happened, oh right, that happened yesterday before I went to sleep. No one wanted to wake him. Poor guy, our guest probably had to sit straight up the whole night. Now, I am curious on how Indo is presenting this to me. Just to be... completely sure.
"Have you looked at the time?" I ask, he shakes his head.
"Sorry-" he says quietly and the man-child seems very apologetic. I suppress a sigh.
"It's fine, what do you need this early?" I say while I stretch before laying down again. Indo carefully closes the door behind him and walks over to my bed, sitting down. Even with a quick glance I can tell he had blushed quite hard. Oh wow. Was he that embarrassed?
"Uh- "
"Okay I see what state you're in, what happened now?" I hope I didn't sound too annoyed while saying that.
"You see, uh... When I woke up this morning, I was laying against the stranger's shoulder, and- and then his head felt on my head-" Indo starts explaining- yet his explanation sound very detached from reality. I understand what he means, yet the way he says it is alien to me. Alright, let's dig deeper. Finally, I turn my whole attention to him.

"Go on." I question, needing more details.
"It was definitely embarrassing."
"I understand, and?" I try not to snicker, my inner child wanting to mock Indo to bad.
"Well-" Indo starts and gets flustered again, now he is really awkward- looking at his hands- playing with his fingers. Come on, reveal all your secrets to me, little boy.
"I think he might be doing something to me. And before you judge me, I know we met him yesterday and this scenario is totally impossible! It's just the heat of the moment, I swear!!" the Indonesia is very keen of defending himself from other opinions today, yet he talks like a waterfall.
"Like, uh, every time he smiles at me, my heart starts racing like crazy. His shoulder and head felt firm, yet kind of comfortable and he is indeed a walking heater! And he is so... mysterious." Indo talks and talks in a very fast manner, both scared and overly eager to share his thought with half-awake me. He continues looks at me, searching for any kind of help or support. I just blink heavily a few times.
"But he isn't fond of me, is he? Allah, I was so stupid yesterday- he must hate me so much and- " I have to say that I'm quite amused. It's good to know how much he regrets and hopefully learned from this experience and that playing pranks on random people has consequences. Yet it's funny to see him his unconfident for once. The stranger might be a good influence on this man-child to make him more of a man. Saying that, my own inner child gets a hold of me. Sure, we met that dude yesterday, it's strange how he ever got here and what happened to him, but looked sweet how both were sitting there yesterday. Together. The stranger seems like a good guy too, minus the PTSD. I don't know where he is coming from, but I guess staying with us might have a good influence on his social abilities too. One hand washes the other! Perfect, we'll keep him. But Indo is jumping to conclusions really fast, it is ridiculous.
"Slow down, Indo. He arrived here YESTERDAY!"
"Shup up, I know!"
"Then why are you behaving that way?!"
"I don't know!"
"You are such a child!"

"Do you not believe at love at first sight?!"

"And now you want me to help you to get HIM to like you or what?!"
"Yea- wait. I didn't say that- " Indo shrieks as he faces his truth and I roll my eyes.
I roll around and out of my bed to stand up and regain the upper hand and not to get hit. I take some deep breaths to calm, trying not to be rude, but this is hilarious, I need to keep this teasing going!
"You are having a crush, my dear friend~ Yeah, crushing on the new person. One that is actually terrified of you." I tell him as I can't stop judging him. How annoying. Indo turns even redder.
Oh, Japan is going to love this! Indo hides beneath my bedsheet in search of safety from me and progresses what just happened within the past 20 minutes of his life. Poor him.

"And what do I do now? As you said, he doesn't seem to like me at all!" Indo looks at me again, hoping for an answer.
"Well, it is to be expected, and you are just loosing your head. Be more reasonable! We encountered him yesterday and you made him afraid of you. It'll take some time, just so you know." watch me giving relationship advise even though I've never been in a relationship. I really love him- in a brotherly way- but I don't want him to rush things. Especially if this should become something deep- no rushing. This is only the second day of the dude staying after all.
"He'll need to stay here for a while anyways, I'd say you two get to know each other better as he heals. Surely, he'll get fonder of you if you take care of him while respecting his boundaries! And don't do anything creepy!" I say, trying to comfort him a bit, and also give some of the upcoming work away. He nods.
"Thanks, it does seem like a good idea." Indo smiled- visibly relieved.
"Well of course, it's my idea after all!" I giggle to lighten the mood. Now, Indo finally smiles too. Another moment of silence, this time, it's more comfortable.
"So, you just left him there in a sitting position? The poor man must have a lot of pain in his back and pelvis." I assume and Indo seems to be in shock for a second.
"Oh shit. He must be in more pain than yesterday!" he said with a little bit of panic in his eyes. I offer him a hand to get off the bed.

"We'll get that better. He needs to rest, but also eat and drink. And we ought to change the bandages too."
"Right. I am getting the medical kit."
"Then let's go back downstairs" I say. With that news from Indo in mind I can't simply go back to sleep, can I? And obliviously the stranger needs to be checked on! My friend takes my hand as help to get off the bed, we walk to the door, and then back downstairs.

Arriving on the ground floor, Indo rushes into the kitchen to get the medical kit as well as some other things as I make my way over to the living room. Entering, it's really bright in here. No wonder Indo woke up that early, I have to buy some darker curtains eventually. Looking around, I spot the stranger sitting on the couch, seemingly passed out. I debate if we should wake him to check his wounds or not, to maybe ease pain as he is passed out. Usually, I like to see with the flickering of the eyes if someone is deeply asleep or not. But would that be invading his privacy? Duh, of course it would be. Yet, it only is for medical reasons. Saying that, as long if no one ever receives that information, I should be good to go! I move closer, yet hesitate. Is that really the right move to do? What if he wakes up as I'm looking. Dread overcomes me and I shut my eyes close to reconcentrate. You can do it! I remain in my current position as I keep hesitating, for so long, that Indo enters the room.
"W-What are you doing?!" he whisper-yells, making me flinch back at least 20cm.
"Nothing!" I whisper-yell back.
"Were you trying to see his face?!"
"It's for medical reasons only!"
"You can't do that!"
"I..." I sigh, giving in.
"I'm sorry. The curiosity overcame me."
"I don't blame you, but you need to stay focused."
"Yeah, yeah. I know. Did you get everything?"
"I did!"
"Good. Should we wake him or nah?"
"Uh... as long as I don't have to do it."
"Alright, alright. Prepare to give me stuff." I sigh and move closer again, now kneeing beside the couch. Very carefully I grab onto the strangers' hand, closely watching if I'd get any reaction. There is none. Indo just watches as I slowly move both hands from his lap to

the sides, then grabbing onto the still bloody poncho.

"What are you?!-" Indo again, whisper-yells as I lift the poncho and coat beneath it to get a view at the bare skin.
"I am looking at the patched-up wound." I sigh and throw a side-eye to my friend and see him turning red again. Right, the crush. I shake my head and focus on the important things. I lay the man's blue chest open and shiver. The bandages are deeply red and soggy. Ew, gross.
"Indo, I need your help removing those."
"A-Alright."

Indo quietly puts the med kit besides us and kneels next to me. Together, we carefully remove the bandages. It reeks and stinks like blood and sweat, it's grossly warm with an even more uneasy strong pulse, it also smells slightly burned. This person needs a shower! It's so nasty! With the last layer gone, we get un uncensored look at the wound. I would wonder if it hadn't penetrated any organs! Indo gulps and I try not to vomit seeing the giant, bloody scar. It leads from the right shoulder to the left hip and it utterly disgusting. Usual blue sin color varies to different purples and reds, even greens. Blood in various dry stages is everywhere as plastic slings keep the swollen, hot flesh in place, so it'll heal properly. It seems so icky. Singa did a good job, but it looks like so much pain. What a beast this man is to have moved so seemingly carefree around yesterday. I get a little dizzy at the sight and close my eyes. I hear Indo breathing next to me.
"Al Allah... I-I didn't except it to look this bad."
"Me neither. Get a wet towel."
"Are... you sure you'll be fine? You look like you'd pass out too any second."
"What?" Finally, I rip my eyes off the gruesome, gory sight and look at Indo.
"You are really pale. And sweaty."
"Uh..."
"Get the towel. And then some rest, I'll take care of it."
"But- "
"You don't look good, Phil." Indo insists. I exhale.
"Alright, fine. I'll... get Malay to help you then. I'll give instructions though."

"Good enough for me."

With that I get up and step away. Immediately I feel less pressed and find the lung capacity to breathe again. God, I feel dizzy, my stomach feels like it's turning. As I get out the room, I lean against the door frame and take deeps breaths, saliva gathering in my mouth. Sour tasting saliva, indicating that my body is ready to vomit. I don't give in though and wash my face with cold water before wetting a towel. I fill a bowl with some water as well and carry that back into the living room. Now even the air smells like death and blood, disgusting. I put the bowl and towel next to into, immensely trying not to look at the scene, opening the windows afterwards. I'll get some clean sheets for the stranger too he can hide in when I'm upstairs, the bloody clothing really needs to be washed!
Like that, I move upstairs to wake up Malay and make him wary of the current situation.

Malaysia's POV

I sit on my bed, gaming on my Ps4. I really like games like Elden Ring. I muffle as I get slapped on a high difficulty. Excuse me, I am trying to practice the next world record! Before I retry with a slightly different strategy than the current world record holder, I hear noises from downstairs coming upstairs. By the rhythm and heaviness of the steps I can tell that it must be Philippines. The steps get closer to my door. I wonder if breakfast is ready? I go to the home menu in sense of pausing the game, as well as my thought progress on it, my eyes already darting to the door, waiting for it to be opened. Then it did. I groan a bit and stretch, standing up against my will to welcome the owner of the house. Upon closer inspection, I realize how pale and unwell he looks. Like he has seen a ghost.
"Uh- good morning?" I more or less ask, a little startled. Phil straightens up.
"Morning. Sorry to bother you in your practice, yet we need your help, immediately."
"What happened?!"
"Well, me and Indo are changing the bandages as well as clean the

wound and... it got too gory for me." Phil explains. Oh. Is it that bad? Phils stomach always has been the weakest, yet he seems sort of terrified. I ought to see that for myself. I nod and walk past Phil out the room to downstairs. Downstairs I'm hit with the disgusting smell of blood. Oh damn- Phil wasn't kidding. I pick up speed and go the living room.
"Wah- "
"Shh! He's still passed out!"
"Sorry!" I whisper-yell back, not sure why I'm doing that. If the stranger is passed out, he won't notice us, even if we're talking at normal volume. Oh well, if Indo feels better, so be it. I walk over to the both and notice the disgusting discoloring of the swollen flesh. Ew! Phil REALLY wasn't kidding. I kneel down next to Indo.
"Holy Shit."
"Yes I know."
"How was he able to appear so pain free last evening??"
"I have no idea, shut up! Get some paper towels to get the rest clean. More clean water as well." Indo demands like an expert. I thought Phil joined the course, yet I guess Indo isn't dumb as a rock. I get up again and walk to the kitchen and get the stuff. On the way back I run into Phil, who carries lotion. Before I am able to ask, he moves past me. Phil must have nerves made of steel to go back in there, even with his phobia. Mad respect. I quickly follow to overhear the conversation.
"I got fatty cream. It'll ease the skin."
"Oh? That's good."
"There aren't any perfumes or stuff in it, so it won't be burning."
"Very good."
"Uh- I got the stuff." I shove myself in and go to the ground again. Indo adapts vastly fast to the change in resources we now have at hand and carefully wipe the rest of the bloody water away.

"It doesn't seem to actively bleed anymore."
"Yeah, the dark red stuff that's still there is scab, it formed to stop the bleeding. That's good. He is getting bedrest immediately and for at least so long that the scab is coming off naturally." Phil speaks from the other side of the room.
"Agreed." both me and Indo reply. I do not need to see a bloody mess like this again this week, and I guess I didn't even witness the worst part too! Indo sighs.

"Just the bandages left, guess we need to go to the store later to get more." He says.
"Let me apply the cream first."
"Are you sure your nerves can take that this close to it?"
"I won't vomit on the spot, shut up." Phil says and Indo rolls his eyes before he fishes out rolls after rolls of bandages. Together with the help of me and Phil we rather quickly finish the bandages off. I make sure that they're firm and will hold up. Afterwards we all three relax a little, taking deep breaths. What a morning. I almost lost my appetite.
"I'll... make breakfast. But I am not sure if I even want to eat something right now."
"Same."
"We'll eat later then. How are we going to get him upstairs?"
"We aren't. We are going to lay him down on the couch and that's it. He is so large and probably too heavy to safely carry, especially with the monstrosity we just dealt with." Phil clarifies and I couldn't agree more, to be honest. So, we all carefully lay him down. The bleeding doesn't seem to start again, which is very relieving. Thank God. I watch as Indo carefully puts a blanket over him. This man-child couldn't take his eyes off the stranger the entire time. I wonder why he stares at him like that. Oh well. I decide to get back to practicing speedruns.
Done as said, I walk up the stairs, reenter my room, and take the controller into my hands, going back into the game. But it seems like the day is hating me, and I get distracted by a commotion outside very soon after I made myself comfortable. Can I just skip this day, please? Looking out the window, I spot America, Russia and Poland, also Greenland standing in front of Phils property. What the hell do they want at our door at 8:15 in the morning? Knowing that Indo is watching the stranger (totally not creepy) and Phil is resting from his phobia, I take it upon myself to deal with them. I look at my game, sigh heavily and make my way downstairs. I proceed to open the front door and stand in the doorframe, looking confused and annoyed on what's happening at the gate. They seem to be discussing. Greenland notices me first and already I feel that he would like to be somewhere else. Despite that, he shoves himself through the other three and walks up to me, followed closely by Poland.

"What the fuck is going on here? It's not even 9am yet." I ask, now observing everyone, turning the attention to me.
"Good morning, Malay!" Ame greets me, slightly calming as Poland inhales too, well actually not really but I'm going to sugarcoat this and anything. Russia also seems to be overcome by a sudden calm, he turns his head to me and waves. I glare from one to the other, slightly waving back, still being confused. Then Greenland clears his throat.
"We wanted to check on the stranger. How is he doing?" he clears the situation and I simply breath in 'honestly I could have figured that our myself'.
"Has been uh... quite the experience." I simply reply, not eager to give more details. But of course, now everybody is curious.
"Can we see him, please?" Poland politely asks. I shake my head.
"No, he is still passed out."
"Oh, okay." The polish man quietly responds. Ame steps closer too.
"I wanted to ask from Singapore, did you have any trouble with the wound?"
"Uh..." I try to figure out how to say the past events from today nicely, avoiding eye contact.
"H-Has he... died?"
"What? No! Changing the bandages was just, uh, not pretty, to say the least." I bring out. Poland sighs in relieve and Ame nods.
"Anything new about his origin?" Russia questions.
"No, none other than he hadn't eaten in a few days."
"I see."
"How long will he stay in bed?" Poland starts showing me in questions yet I simply do not have the patience right now. I make a movement with my hand to shush them.
"He's stable and as said, resting right now! But if anything happens, you'll know, now please leave!" I spit, being annoyed. The excitement of the other dies down and I get some murmurs as I watch them leave. Crisis avoided. Good job, if I say so myself~

I walk back inside to take care of my own business. Their questions are solid though, and I hope to find the answer to them too. Oh well, I guess the stranger has to wake up first.

6| Friends

Indonesia 's POV

I sit at the edge of the couch, holding my 'Mate's hand. He has been sleeping for three days straight and it's visible that he got thinner and more fragile. He's still breathing and radiating heat though. I wonder if it's just a deep sleep, or even a coma?! But he seems conscious enough to breath stable on his own. I believe that is good?
'It is, I just worry about you obsessing over him. Phil had some EXCELENT points!'
"He is sort of cute."
'NO!'
"Yes." Yet, he needs to wake up soon, or else the recovery might be harder. The curiosity of what happened and who he really is, is killing me from the inside too.
'You are an idiot, BUT I can confirm I am dying' Also, that his hood still covers his face. I refuse to peak and keep the face covered, as anyone should. I could be doing anything else, yet I prefer to stay here, right next to him. Maybe Phil is right and I am weird, thinking and acting on him like that. It's weird, considering the circumstances, but it feels right. The fascination of the unknown, maybe. I look at the ceiling and then put my cheek against his hand. It feels rough. He must be very hard working to have rough hands like these. I like that. Phil enters the room and hands me Boba.
"Still hanging around him? After three days?"
"Mhm. Thanks for the Boba."
"No problem, but beware of developing a hand fetish." he teases, rolling his eyes in annoyance. Phil, what the hell?! I'm not that weird! I flush up and give him an angry glare.
"Ayo!"
"I'm kidding, I'm kidding, sorry."
"Mhm... sure."
"I'm sure he'll wake up soon. And then we bring him upstairs and

chance the bandages again, for hygienic reasons. Otherwise, we do it tomorrow, ok?"
"Sounds like a plan." I reply and watch Phil wandering upstairs. He is such a nice person, if he wouldn't tease me that often, that is. I look at the clock. It's 2:30pm already. Time flies by. Suppose I should stretch a bit. I lay my 'Mate's hand back on the couch and stand up, stretching. That feels good. I hope Phil stops teasing me soon. I hate him- why the hell did I tell him my emotion again? Cause I am an attached idiot.
I get into the temptation to go outside and actually do anything... but what if he wakes up while I'm gone?! No, I cannot risk that, but I guess going into the kitchen for noodles wouldn't hurt, surely. I take a sip of my boba and walk into the kitchen to get the left-over noodles. I pick a package of Indomie out of the cupboard and make myself a simple meal. Simple, yet delicious! So, I enjoy my food and boba, looking out the window. It's warm outside, some would consider it hot, but it's only 25 degrees, so meh, kind of alright, a little cold even. I take out my phone and start scrolling through various social media. We can own social network, yet we cannot share out location. I think people have already figured it out anyways with today's technology, but rules are rules and I don't make them. I spend maybe an hour watching dumb shit before deciding to get offline again. Actually, it is really nice if you don't have to online all the time. I clean the dishes so Phil won't get mad at me I swear to Allah, and walk back to the living room. Seemingly, nothing has changed. So, I shake my pillow and sit next to the couch on the floor. The regular yet strong breathing from my 'Mate' is steady in the background and I've grown to find it relaxing, even though I would never admit that to anyone. Never in my live, especially not to Phil! God. I sigh and take his hand once more. It's warm, very warm.
'Such body heat.' I find myself smiling unconsciously. I remain there, comfortable as suddenly the hand twitches and I get startled. HUH?! I let go of the foreign body part and watch it regaining consciousness with widen eyes. I need to call someone! Malay?? He is out with the others. Phil then! I spin around and rush up the stairs, almost falling. My heart races in my chest. Finally! After all those days! Finally, I can learn more about him!! I slam the door open and Phil flinches, looking up from his book with wide eyes.

"What the hell?!"
"He is waking up!"
"The stranger?!"
"Who else!"
"Oh my! Get the med kit- I am calling Mal!" Phil practically throws the book on the sheets as he leaps off the bed, I rarely see him this athletic. I waste no time though and do as I am told and rush down stairs to the kitchen to get the med kit, as well as all of new and clean bandages that we managed to grab, at least as much as I could carry. I return to Phil standing in front of the couch, holding my 'Mate's hand. I stop, a little out of breath from the racing heart and the panic of the situation. I watch as the man on the couch gets to his senses and tries to sit up, in which I and Phil aid him in. He seems disorientated and a little lost, frantically looking around. He also seems in a state of panic, trying to keep his face covered. Maybe a mask would do? I need to ask my friend Spain about this, maybe he could provide! I make a mental note and I try to calm him. I pity him, he shouldn't feel scared around us, and I need to make things right. After all the mess. I bow down to his Hight and Phil takes a step back.
"Shh... don't worry, we didn't look at your face. We can get you a mask if you like." I try to calm him, taking his right hand.
'Don't, you'll make it awkward.'
He keeps breathing heavily, yet he seems to look and me, gradually calming. I internally cheer. Oh, hell yes. He then grabs onto my own hand as if it was helping, even though it was slow and hesitantly. I keep the warm smile on my face.
"It's alright, you can do that." I assure. Not letting go of his hand either I hand him a water bottle.
"You slept for three days and lost weight and body fluid; it might take a while to recover." I explain, saying what Phil said some time ago. I don't get a physical reaction except him letting go to take and unscrew the bottle, yet I have the feeling that he made a mental note of that. I sit down at the edge of the couch.
"How are you feeling?" I get a mixed response. Now Phil tunes into the conversation.
"We need to rebandage your wound. We'd do it now and then move upstairs, is that alright?"
He nods and I get concerned for Phil.
"Shouldn't we wait until Mal is here?"

"I can do this, the phobia isn't that bad. And if you look, it doesn't seem like there was much more bleeding than the first time, I can handle some swollen skin!"
'It is pretty disgusting though.'
"Don't make it worse for me, please."
'Fine, I really don't want you to puke. I'll stay quiet for a while.'
"Thank you for cooperating, FOR ONCE."

Phil almost shoves me aside that I fall face first onto the ground and carefully lifts the poncho of tour 'Mate'. It's still bloody, we couldn't change it without revealing his privacy which I insisted on keeping! I need to gain his trust and this is an important first step!! I help Phil unraveling the bandages. They and his body radiate so much heat. Is it him or is it because of the wound? I don't know... The last few rows of bandages a have a few red stains on them, but I presume that it's normal as there always is some after bleeding with any wound that is bleeding in the first place. Looking at the skin beneath the sheets I get surprised at how much better it looks than 3 days ago. It's... almost fully healed?! How is this possible! I've seen smaller wounds of similar caliber that took weeks to heal like this. I look with wider eyes to Phil, who is also surprised. What a beast this man is, walking around with a wound like nothing and recovering from it so quickly. It's so manly, so strong and muscular, so mysterious and so attractive~

I mentally slap myself for drifting away like this, I can simp later. I let Phil inspect closer. He sounds amazed.
"Wow... almost a full recovery in three days?! How is that possible??? No one has such a good immune system!" he is physically breaking his head to ponder on these questions as said person gets embarrassed, carefully trying to cover up the wound, seemingly not like the questioning and/or attention. I internally awe over that but keep my more or less professional vibe.
"No. no, it's fine, we are just amazed with your body's abilities to recover this quickly!" I assure again and it seems to help a little. I keep chatting and telling him that all is well as Phil proceeds to apply more fatty cream and bandages again. I am just a distraction, so to say. Afterwards, the plan is to the him to the bedroom upstairs, so he has a proper bed with proper privacy to properly recover! We both help him to get up, yet to our surprise the man

has no problem walking at all and doesn't even need the help. So, we kind of watch/lead the way instant of providing support. At the top of the stairs, the sound of the front door unlocking rings through the house and Phil gets downstairs again to inform Mal on the situation. Meanwhile I open the door to the guest room and lead the fellow 'Mate' inside. He looks around and I motion him to the bed. I watch as he sits down and slowly goes under the sheets again. I sit on the bed and he watches me do so.
"That's your room from now on! You need to get rest to get well again! Also, you'll have your privacy here, no one will enter until you want to!" I proudly tell him. Yet, the man looks puzzled and I remember, oh shoot he is mute. I quickly get up.
"One moment." I chuckle nervously and race out the room into my own room. A few minutes later I reenter with a pair of walkie talkies. They were gifted to me ages ago but the battery still works! I place one of the walkie talkies on the night stand next to the bed.

"Here you go, you just need to send a signal and I'll come to help you!" I announce with a bright smile, confidently putting my hands on my hips. My 'mate' seems overwhelmed for a moment, his face fading into a soft smile, shooting my heartrate through the roof. I flush up and look around the room. That gesture of him is so expressive and so warm and so sweet oh my god! I clear my throat, trying to get myself together. Surely, he needs some privacy. I do, to process the happening things right now.
"Well, I'll be going then if you don't need anything- "I mumble loud enough for him to hear it, taking a last look at the man beneath the covers. As soon as I'm out, surely, he'll pull off the poncho and reveal his face to the air. My 'Mate' though, makes a motion that gestures me to come closer to him. My heart beats heavily in my chest as I do, yet I feel excited about it. He grabs my hand and takes a look at it. My hands are scared from the past, and he uses his pointer finger from the other hand to trace them. I tickles a little and I stare at it happening as my cheeks burn. Is this real? Soon he's done, gives me a firm hand shakes and lets go. I need a moment to recollect myself and also take my hand back, touching it with my own. Oh my...
A sudden adrenalin rush kicks in and I stumble around, embarrassed.
"O-OKAY I'LL GO NOW GET SOME REST!" I almost yell and rush

out the room, closing the door behind me. My brain is working at the speed of light and I feel embarrassed once more. The way I left was so childish. That sucks. He'll think I'm stupid or something!
'Mhm...'
"I told you to stay quiet!"
'But it's over, isn't it?' I sigh and collect my thoughts and cringe at my stupidity, eventually making my way down the stairs to discover Phil and Malay talking in the hallway. I heavily step down the stairs and stand beside them.

"Did you just scream?"
"Don't... Don't ask."
"Why are you so red? Well, you are usually red due to your flag but not this flushed up." Malay comments and I flush up even more. Phil sighs behind him, exactly knowing what is going on. That bastard. Before I am able to say anything Phil grabs Mal's shoulder and whispers in his ear, then both looking at each other. How dare they-
"I am RIGHT HERE you know!" I yell, furious and embarrassed. My friends laugh.
"Awh Indo! I didn't know you're crushing on people you don't know!" Malays speaks in a mocking matter and Phil shakes his head. I knew Malay would bully me, that's not fair. Malay sees the sour and disappointed expression that I make and calms. He smiles though, which doesn't help.
"Sorry! Sorry! I think Phil is teasing you enough already. You need to tell me everything though!"
"Alright." No way I'll ever be doing, Malaysia. I'm not gonna tell Phil anything else too! By Allah, you two can get annoying! Too bad Phil owns the house and I have nowhere else to go. I stretch.
"Next topic."
"Sure. How is he?"
"Got up and in without trouble. Phil told you; I presume?"
"Yeah!"
"Well I told him that we wouldn't enter the room without his permission and left a walkie talkie in there in case he needs something."
"But he cannot talk?"
"The signal, Idiot."
"Right."

"His ability to recover is fascinating though." Phil mumbles and I nod. It is impressive.
"He was able to walk and climb stairs, seemingly without trouble or pain."
"Wait, wait, wait, three days after this... *THING* that we had to patch up?!"
"Mhm. Just like the day he arrived."
"What a monster. Is he even human?"
"Mal! Of course, he is human."
"You sure he's not an alien?"
"They don't exist."
"Oh really?"
"Well with that argumentation: There wasn't a crash anywhere or anything!"
"TCH."
Phil shoves himself between us arguing. My 'Mate' as an alien? That's the dumbest thing I heard in forever! We both glare at each other with frustration. A moment of silence until Phil speaks, looking at me, trying to ease the situation.
"And there really wasn't anything else between you two in the room?"
"PHIL!"

The day, and also the night passes relatively quick and a new day arrived! I am kind of worried though, as no Signal from the walkie talkie radiated. I wonder if he is alright? Should I check on him?! But that'd be the violation of the rules that I made. I don't know, I'm going to the bathroom. I get dressed, walk out the room and stumble upon Malay carrying clothing.
"Morning Indo!"
"Ah, good morning!" I reply, eyeing the clothes. Mal picks up on the gesture.
'I'd rather have a bad morning.'
"Remember me being out yesterday evening? You all were sleeping when I came back, BUT I sto- borrowed(!) a hoodie from Russia."
"You what?!"
Come on, don't be so shocked, he'll get it back... eventually."
"I, okay fine. And this hoodie is for him?"
"The stranger, yes."
"He's not- "

"We don't really know him, so I'll stick with this name."
"Alright." I sigh, knowing that I cannot change his mind, He's got a point, after all. Malay though, smiles.
"I'm sure you have figured out why I brought this!"
"Sure, it's quite oblivious. Cloth swapping, right?"
"Exactly~"
Malay strictly walks towards the bedroom door and knees down in front of it. It leaves me so baffled that I just watch as he carefully opens the door and shoves the hoodie in, looking to the ground. He closes the door and gets up as nothing had happened.
"Satisfied? I didn't look at him."
"I... thank you." I softly smile. Malay grins sheepy.
"Well it seems to mean a lot to you, so I do respect it." He says and I chuckle. Oh yeah, I remember why he is my best friend again.
Suddenly, Mal gets really close.
"Aren't you curious though?! It's killing me from the inside to know him!"
"Yeah, me too, but let him take his time. He seems incredibly shy."
"Oh well, you should know~"
"He- "
"Kidding. Phil's out for buns, you going to help me set the table?"
"Sure, I'll just head to the bathroom really quick."
"Aight!"

Like that, we part ways again and I get into the bathroom for my usual routine. That includes going to the toilet, washing my hair and brushing my teeth. I get those things done relatively quickly and I smile to myself in the mirror. Today might be a good day! The man's awake and maybe I'll spend some time with him. Or I'll game with Malaysia. He is grinding out attempts for his next stream. One of those. A walk would be nice too, I got too much energy from being inside the house for multiple days in a row. I finish with washing my face, then opening the window to even out the humidity between the bathroom and the outside; Phils instructions. Oh well, am I hungry for some food. Happily, I walk out the bathroom into the hallway. I stop though as I watch a door being closed, a tall figure standing in the room, wearing a grey hoodie. Oh, it's him! I panic for a second. Is it alright for him to be on foot?! He is supposed to rest! But, those recovery abilities. I really don't know what to think anymore. Phil will know better! I breathe to

calm and approach him. He carries his poncho and watches me getting closer.
"Good morning! Have you rested well?"
He nods.
"Great! We'll have breakfast soon. Do you really feel well enough to walk? We can bring you the food upstairs."
He makes a gesture with his hand that we don't need to. My shoulders relax.
"Uh, okay. But don't be afraid to communicate if something is wrong!"
A hesitation, then nodding. I look at the blood-stained poncho.
'A bunch of work.'
"We should try to get those stains out. We have removers in the bathroom!" I say, eager to take it from him. He doesn't really resist and I do, backing up again. The blood is dry and hard. It needs to soak in water before the remover would do anything... That's alright though, we can soak it during breakfast. I look back to him.
"Don't worry, it'll be clean and dry by the afternoon I think." I promise and he nods. I watch him for a moment and realize that he really is only wearing the hoodie... and underwear. My eyes instinctively dart down for a moment but I quickly turn, shutting my eyes.
'You ABSOLUTE IMBECILE!'
"Sorry!"
'OH MY GOD.' I make my way to the bathroom again as I hear the stairs creaking. So, he is going to the ground floor. As I fill the sink with water the picture of him has burned himself into my mind. God, it seems so big. I put my hand in my face. No, shut up, you're not perverted! Just... a little gay maybe. If you'd be straight, you'd automatically be staring at boobs instant! I shake my head but the image doesn't go away. I internally scream and slap myself in the face. I hate it so much. Why am I like this?!

I take a good minute or two to calm down, oh dear, now it'll be awkward around him again! No! I shake my head once more before leaving the bathroom to go downstairs as well. At the door on the ground floor, I am met with Phil.
"Heya!"
"Oh hey..."
"Anything wrong?"

"No, it's just- you'll- you'll see for yourself!" I simply blurt out and keep walking. I feel Phils slightly confused gaze on my back but I ignore it, turning a corner into the kitchen. I am a little surprised but also not to see my 'Mate' sitting on a chair as Mal spins around the kitchen. This time though, he has warped himself into the blanket from the living room to cover the lower parts of his body. I internally thank him for making my live easier.
"There you are, Indo!"
"Sorry I'm late, I got started on soaking the blood out of his coat."
"Ah, I was already wondering." Malay gestures as Phil enters the kitchen as well. He is surprised to see the formerly bed-ridden person well at the table. Phil doesn't ask questions though and just sits down.

Then we have breakfast, nothing unusual. Sure, the 'Mate' doesn't talk, but we three as social people aren't excluding him! As everyone should! Yet, after breakfast Phil convinces him to stay in bed a while longer to recover and then we both spend at least an hour to clean the poncho as best as possible. Some stains are still a little visible, but it is much better. Afterwards we hang it up in the sun to let it dry. Good job.
I spend some time gaming with Malay. Well, it's already evening again, whoops! Oh well! Ought I go for a walk. I put the controller down.
"Hm?"
"I'll go outside before dinner."
"Do you want me to join you?"
"Nah, I need some time alone."
"Got it. Can you grab me some papers from Lux's house? He said he'd had a few spares for me."
"Why would you need extra paper?"
"To write down my strategies of course! For notes and stuff!"
"Ah, okay. Will do!"
"Thanks! See you later, friend!"
"Bye!" I smile and wave, walking out the room.
I definitely need some fresh air- getting out of this atmosphere. Malay barely opens the windows wide, so the air is always stuffy, too. And also opening the windows doesn't completely clear the smell of reeking blood in my opinion, the living room still smells like it. I hate deep cleaning but I guess there isn't a way around it! I

sigh and look outside the window. The sky is already getting color, it must be at least 8pm. And we haven't had dinner yet? I guess that is okay, had lunch earlier. I decide to finally get out of here. The urge to walk and run around is getting too big. Malay knows that I'm leaving, but Phil does not and I don't want that. Sneaking out without worrying anyone. I suppose he is sitting inside the small garden that we have. It's Phil's hobby. As I walked out of the living room though and around the corner, looking to the ground as I am lost in thoughts, I bump into something tall and sturdy. A wall?! Here?!

"Au-" I yelp and take a few steps back, almost falling in the process as I just lost my balance, and look up to see that I didn't bump into a wall (*Would have been strange though, a wall in the middle of a hallway*), but instant into my 'Mate'. I blink at him for a moment and he blinks back, both of us utterly surprised. He seems to be shaking a little from the shock and I already fear consequences for him and from the others, so I really don't know if I should be relieved or not that he wasn't an actual wall. On one hand, we were cool with each other yesterday, on the other hand, his panic attack a few days ago was my fault after I scared him. And I just did that again!! I really don't mean to trigger any further trauma! Really! He seems to recollect himself for a moment and looks down to me, tilting his head. He is wearing his coat again and there is a tulip in his hand. Where did he get that from? I clear my throat and look to the ground again, not daring to see at his face.
"I'm sorry, I didn't see you there. Didn't mean to scare you... again." I apologize, panicking a little as I don't want him to break down like before. It sort of broke my heart as usually my pranks are light hearted and don't end this terribly, and I feel still guilty.
'As you should, you child.'
"Stop bullying me!"
Silence. It is becoming unbearable to me. I lift my head a little and look to the flower in his hand: a yellow Tulip. Again, where the hell did he get it from? It's summer, Tulips don't bloom this season. I inhale deeply before speaking.
"That's a... really nice tulip that you got there!" I try to chance the topic. Deciding that I should stop asking, he is mysterious after all, he'll explain if he likes too. It's not like I can force him. He smiles warmly at me and holds the flower closer to himself, seemingly

happy to have it. I find myself in a state of awe as I watch him, feeling myself blushing a bit again. Ah Allah. But this time I manage to control my body and just smile back as calmly as possible. And this is how I turned an awkward conversation into a wholesome one! I mentally pat myself on the shoulder for that achievement. My 'Mate' looks at me for a moment. A long moment. A very long moment where he stopped smiling. And like that I started worrying once more. I thought I did it?! What did I do wrong now? Did he notice that I hide my feelings?!

Another moment later. the tall person switches looks between me and his flower until he hands me the tulip. I fall into a state of shock, and probably visibly turning redder than my already red flag. Oh my, he just gifted me his flower.
'That is... quite romantic, not going to lie You two are moving WAY too fast!'
"What? He hit a sweet spot with YOU?"
'I- I MEAN- '
I ignore him, starting to day dream. That is so kind and so sweet and I could kiss him- okay, no, not yet, calm down Indo, now that is a childish fantasy. I do not need to rush anything. A hug would fulfill my dreams though, only maybe.
Yet, my excitement was ruined, really, smashed into thousands of pieces, as he takes out a paper and a pen from behind, and I watch as he starts writing. He... didn't gave me the tulip because he was being nice or even feeling something for me too, or even to be thankful or anything, he gave it to me because he needed free hands to write. I just was holding the tulip for him while he wrote. I look at the beautiful flower and feel my heart cracking. Man, I want to cry, it wouldn't be a good idea though. But I guess the feelings aren't mutual. As... to be expected.
'Ouch.'
My vision blurs a bit and my throat closes, yet I keep myself together to not break down myself. It wouldn't set a good example for him. Not long after, my 'Mate' takes his tulip back and hands me the now written paper. I feel quite demotivated to read it but I did anyways.

'Where are you going?' The paper read. I sigh and look away from the paper and from him.

"I need some fresh air, to get out of the house for a while. That's all." I say, rubbing the back of my neck. I glare back to him thinking. He tilts his head, and then points his finger at himself after a short time. I take a moment to process the action and raise an eye brown.
"You... want to join me? Are you sure? You don't have you- and your condition!" I ask, trying to find out what he's trying to tell me and to make sure I understood him right. My 'Mate' nods, making me think for a second, actually putting me into a really hard debate. I really want to be alone, especially after getting friend zoned like this, but on the other side, I get to spend time with my crush. Alone. Without those teasing idiots. In the end, I decide to go for the second option. Phil said I should get to know him better, so this might be a good chance.
"Uhm... Sure- I don't mind at all!" I smile hesitantly at him. Seeing my reaction, he shoots up, seeming excited in his shy and cute manner, putting the tulip on a nearby closet- actually the one where Phil ordered us to store our shoes- and looks at me again, causing me to continue smiling widen. He's really sweet. Doesn't the tulip need water though? I take the flower back and he watches me, confused.
"It needs water, or else it dies sooner or later." I just say, wondering how he didn't know. The tall man seems embarrassed and rubs the back of his head with his hand. I can't help but to chuckle. I quickly aid the flower with the water, putting it inside a vase, then heading back to him and we make our way outside.

Outside on the empty street, we make our way down the street- without being interrupted by any other country. Nice. I don't think I could handle America or Poland today; they are always so curious about him. Annoying. Today isn't as warm as yesterday- so it's more comfortable to walk around underneath the sun. We walk in a comfortable silence. Nothing interesting. The tall male next to me looks around the area from one house to the other, and I watched him doing that. I lead us to the way of Luxembourg's house in the meantime. Suppose I get the papers first and then we continue to walk around the neighborhood. But that'd get more attention than I want us to have... maybe going to the beach? The beach is relaxing enough and quiet. And if there are people we can just go to another point and have our alone time there. I keep thinking about it until

we pass the house of Luxembourg. He lives there with his family: Belgium and their father Dutch Republic. I hope this will not be awkward between us after what happened at the beach... My 'Mate' suddenly stops and stares at the house. I didn't tell him yet that we were going here, this was pure instinct. This is the first time he does that. Stopping while looking at a house I mean. We've been walking past houses for 15 mins straight, so I wonder why- is he ok? Minutes pass as I carefully and closely inspect his behavior. No one of us moves, I didn't dare to move, even though I wanted to be here in the first place. The noises of footsteps- a really quiet noise appears. Someone seemed to be running on wooden floor. Must be coming from the inside. The door opens.
"Excuse me?" a confused Luxembourg stands at the frame of the door. Not knowing what to do, I wave at him.
"Ah... hey Indo- is this a friend of yours?" He asks. I inhale- thinking about what to say. I wasn't really prepared for this. Does Lux know what happened? I am not sure actually.
"Uhm- it's- complicated- I... need some spares papers for Malay too." I simply answer. Lux looks at us, his eyes darting to the coated man, turns arounds, shouts something inside the house in a for me foreign sounding language. He gets a response from a female voice, probably Belgium. What is he planning? I feel like he looked at my friend for too long... Lux vanishes within the house and reappears shortly after, walking outside and closes the door, making his way over to us, clearly interested in the tall guy in the coat for some reason, standing closer to him as to me, practically scanning the guy... I'm not liking his interest at all. He seems too watchful and interested in him. I am not calling him **MY** 'Mate' for no reason after all!
"Who is this- and how did he get here? Also why were you two staring at my house if you just needed some papers, Indo?" He says, eyeing the tall man carefully. I get the sudden impulse to leave, or at least, get away from Lux. I snap the papers from his hands, a little jealous.
"Well, I'm sorry that we caused trouble but we need to keep going." I shrug and continue walking- tearing my 'Mate' with me- hope to avoid giving any answer or continuing the conversation further. But Lux sadly doesn't give up, and promptly decides to walk next to me. Annoying. Why would he be so persistent? I thought Lux is only sad all the time as this little prick should be. Stop following us! We look

at each other, the tension between us is back- for whatever reason, I feel some sort of rivalry bubbling up inside of me. He isn't planning of stealing him away from me is he? I wouldn't let this happen! My 'Mate', now the third wheel here, switches confused looks between us. But he shouldn't bother himself with those things.

"Well?" Lux asks.
"You see- some days ago- the evening where we were at the beach, Ame and some others found this man right here. And now he's staying with Phil, Mal and *me*. And he'd like to stay with us in the future too." I explain as short as possible, as he's a bit annoying at the moment, narrowing my eyes at him.
"And why were you standing in front of my house for like- 15 minutes?" Lux questions. 15 minutes? Were we staring that long?
"Uh-" I start, but was interrupted by yelling from an unknown voice.

"HEY, I FINALLY FOUND YOU!"

Extra Chapter

After forming a plan, sneaking into the allegedly 'heroic' center of the multiverse and easily knocking out I entered the main building without getting noticed. Good for me~ but again, it was easy, they're all stupid and arrogant. I silently walk near the walls through the dark corridors, staying in the shadows as best as possible. The hallways are tall and wide, white and shining dimly in the moon light. The ceiling is rounded and domelike, the hallway stretching very long to the main tower where lots of portals are contained. I don't want to there though, I want to go higher up in the building beside the tower, where all the UNI-Codes are stored and detailed descripted. Those will help me much more than some shining, dimension traveling light. With that in mind I continue forwards. Adding, that the ground is incredibly solid and the building is quite echoing, moving around undetected is a huge pain in my ass. I would have teleported if I knew where to go to and if the magic-sucking curse wasn't here, yet I don't have the time to rage about that now. Finding him is more important. Occasionally, guards cross my way- but somehow, I manage to stay hidden to their eyes. They must be blind. Idiots. You're lucky you aren't my prey today~ or otherwise your life would have ended in a gruesome way. What an insult to the higher ups to have blood-stained marble in their sacred halls. As I watch the beings pass by, I really have to control he urge to silently appear behind them to slice their throat open and silence their screams as they drown in their own blood. That would be so nice~ Okay, I am getting distracted now~
I have to say- this building is absolutely HUGE. I didn't expect it to be this big. Way huger than I could ever imagine, a pure maze even! Annoying. Counterproductive. The main tower in its middle is round and very tall, I still don't think I can say where the roof is. As I make my way closer to the middle through the marblelike hallways, more and more guards get in my way, causing me to do parkour as silently as possible. You

all are getting on my nerves, those people really want to die tonight, don't they? How... provoking~ This is not good for my level of self-control~ As I turn a final corner, I get a look at some portals on the ground level and the few first upper and lower levels. And oh wow. They are shiny and mystical and weird. I guess I prefer teleporting on my own. No wonder there is barely any magic around here, the portals are sucking up every last wavelength of it in the air. Now, one of those is leading me to him~ The big question is which one is the right one. Mm~ I mean, I can't just go to a guard and be like: 'Hello, sorry for breaking in but I'm searching for a certain someone from a very specific AU, can you help me please?'- nah- would be basically suicide, for them. Yet again, the offices are my main goal. I'd wonder a lot if they stationed guard within all the paperwork. I decide to use more of my stored energy to break through the anti-magic curse to teleport onto the stairs to get a better view and holy moly, this is draining as shit. Bad idea.

I spot above me somewhere on the opposite side of the building light shining out of a room of an upper floor. Firstly: From the plans I know that this is the Portal-management floor, or something like that, I believe. Secondly: What. It's legit somewhere around 11pm- why is there someone?? I pause for a moment, then tilt my head and smile widen. But... yes~ that could be good for me~ if I manage to do that the right way, or I could just threaten. I don't waste any time and make my way towards the door and just stand there. Very dangerous action in a place where enemies could be anywhere around the next corner, but I'm slowly running out of patience. I know- I don't have much of that~ Whoever is in there surely is an employee~ A perfect tool to get to my goal quick~ I put my hands in the pockets of my jacket and summon one of my knifes. It drains a little more energy than usual right now, but I absorbed so much pure ENERGY that it should bother me much more. Pff- this curse is almost laughable~
I take a moment to focus, then I politely knock. No need to be barging in if I can intimidate them enough to not spill blood. Yet, if their annoying I might just give in to the instinct~ After a few seconds I quietly open the door a tiny bit to spy into the

room. The room is large with many shelves. At the opposite side of the room is a large window that bathes the room in a surprisingly bright light. A lamp isn't even necessary, and it's in the middle of the night! A woman sits there at a desk right in front of the window- papers and books everywhere. The woman at the desk wears thick glasses, has long white hair tied into a bun and wears formal clothes. She clears her throat and asks, without looking up.
"Yes?"

I step inside the room, carefully closing the door behind me. I take a leap and jump in one jump on the desk, remaining sitting on my feet, glaring her down slightly from above. I am not that tall, so I do that to be more intimating. My landing causes everything to shake on the desk. What a nice thing~. The woman's movements freeze for a moment before she looks up. Her eyes widen as she sees me grinning at her this close up. I simply look back at her. We stare at each other for a short time- then she flips out, backing away in her chair. How cute~
"A-A demon!" **She almost yells and I immediately grab her chin and close the jar shut. I hope this didn't alert anyone. I keep my hand below her face to prevent any other noises that could expose me. I do not have the patience. Well, this is starting great. She could immediately tell that I'm not an 'angle' because I didn't even bother to hide my so called 'aura'. It's basically mana filled air- showing off what kind of power/ magic the owner is keeping inside themselves. Ironic with the magic sucking portals around here. Everyone's aura here is faint and less, they all are rather weak, yet mine remained strong~ It must really scare the poor thing~ She has the right to know who I am before she might *die*.**
"I prefer to be described as a Shapeshifter- but okay." I say terrifyingly calm. The woman throws a fit and gets free, backs up more and stands up, summoning some kind of useless stick in her hand. It begins to glow in a light green. I raise my hands a little- only a little though, showing her my knife too. I really don't have time for a fight so I'll make that quick, but only after I get the information I need~
"Put that thing down, I'd be shame if your papers would get soaked, wouldn't it? ~ All this delicate work gone in an

instant~ I'm not here to fight or anything- *unless*..." I growl. The woman hesitates, but gives in with my threat. She really values work above her life. Pathetic. But people always assume that I'm some kind of evil shit just because I'm a shapeshifting thing. But that's not important now. The woman in front of me slightly lets her guard down as she carefully watches me.
"Then... w-why are you here? You know *things* like you aren't allowed here!" **Ouch- to be honest that hurt a bit. How dares she? I put my hands calmly in my pockets and stand up to my full height.**
"I'm here because I need a certain UNI-Code." I tell her, going straight to the point.
"But who am I talking to?" I add to my sentence, not that I could ever care. Now the woman glares unsurely around the room before her eyes dart back to me. I smirk, knowing that I caught a glimpse of her interest beside the oblivious fear she really should have. Great~
"My... n-name is Willowson Mei. A-And you are?" **she says, giving me a critical look.**
"Oh? You should know who I am~ Your poor heroes keep dying to me~" I simply reply, grinning sadistic in the memories. Her eyes widen again, further this time as she realizes the weight of a situation she is in.
"W-Wait- YOU are-" **I interrupt her, putting my finger in front of my mouth.**
"Shhhhh~ Some names are better not spoken too loudly around here."
'Willowson' fiddles with her finger, now talking more quiet.
"I-I remember reading about you in some files that other had gathered. You are... manipulating, destroying, recreating and visiting universes... causing all this chaos for- for fun- right?" **I tilt my neck.**
"It's quite amusing, yeah. That's me." I look at Willow.
"A-And why do you search for a special universe-code?" **she continues to ask and I get a little impatient. She is asking too much. Her life is on the line and then THIS**
"Quit talking this much, I need a Countryhuman AU."
"We h-have millions of timelines and AUs with this theme. I-I would need more detail." **She says and I sigh deeply. Annoying!**
"What kind of details?"

"Backstories give a lot of detail." **Willowson says, sweating. I hoped I wouldn't have to remind myself of that backstory ever again- and I will not. I put my foot down with force, making the woman jump and the table shriek.**
"I'll tell you that once. You better listen. Do NOT make tell you this twice! I'll give you a description and you the options. Any more questions or useless talk and you're dead!" I hiss and point my knife at her. She squeaks and nods again. I close my eye and try to calm my aggression a bit.

I jump off the table and let her get back to her workspace and start explaining myself. Soon, I'll have all the codes I'll ever need and even sooner,

I'll find him.

7| Another Stranger

[image]

Indonesia's POV

All of us, Luxembourg, my 'Mate' and me, turn around with the speed of light. Who just said that?! Looking onto the mostly empty street, I spot a small woman standing around 50 meters away from us, waving with her right arm. Hold on, ANOTHER STRANGER?! How are people getting in here?! Is there a leak in the fence or the hell is going on! I question everything in existence as there suddenly is a quiet gasp. Turning my head around once more to see a shocked expression from my 'Mate'. He has an unbelievingly surprised expression on his face, I cannot tell if he is shocked or excited. Not that it is easy to tell anyways. I watch closely as he takes deep breaths, carefully taking a step forward to the woman. A nerve strikes me.
What? Do... Do they know each other? Is that why he's that shocked? With the others he'd consider strangers he didn't act that way. My stomach pulls itself together into slight cramps as I eye the events unfolding in front of my eyes.
My 'Mate's shock then turns into present excitement; him smiling wide. Suddenly, he starts running towards the woman. That can't be good for his health! And I don't want him running near that woman!
"Ey! Slow down! Think of the wound!!" I yell after him, yet I am not gonna lie: damn is he fast as fuck. Is it because he has long legs? Maybe, it doesn't have to be the reason. Russia is a slow one, and he is quite tall as well. Yet, my words reach him and he slows down. The other stranger (again, man is there a hole in the fence or why are so many new people here in such a short time?) is walking towards my 'Mate' as well, doing the same thing, welcoming him with open arms. From the distance, their grin seems sinister, sending creeps down my spine. Oh my... who has my 'Mate' gotten involved with? I should be careful. I don't like where this is going, due to many reasons. I watch them eventually meeting and then they quickly hug each other- my 'Mate' not letting go as quickly,

even lifting the woman off the ground, spinning with her around. I almost feel my throat closing as I dart my eyes at them. Now taking a step forward, standing next to me, Lux tilts his head, curiously at what is going on. I'm surely as confused as he is, but deep inside my stomach I feel my muscles tensing up. It makes me angry. So unbelievingly aggressive. Am I just that jealous? I am jealous. It's weird, I don't really know this man *yet*, but I really do not like this woman. I don't like how close they are to each other. I wonder how close they actually are?

"Indo, are you there!" I suddenly snap back into reality as Lux waves his hand in front of my face. I blink heavily and turn my head to him.
"What?!" I hiss, a little annoyed.
"Well sorry for interrupting your stare. Are you alright?" Lux rolls his eyes and sighs. I wonder why he suddenly worries about me. A rather unusual move if I say so myself.
"Geez. You look like you could kill someone right about now." Lux exhales and I pause for a moment. Is it really that bad? This oblivious? I really need to get myself together. Not that anything happens that ruin my chances to be with *him*.
"O-Oh? Yeah- I'm good. Really. Don't worry!" I quickly reassure before looking back. Luxembourg remains a little dumbfounded and annoying, but decides to watch the further happening of this event too. It's rather rare for something like this to happen after all. Like that, we look back at my 'Mate' and this woman, who both seem very happy and walk back to the both of us. The woman smiles at us and I just hate dislike her even more. Very soon they have reached us and I can feel the air getting heavy. Personally, my brain is racing to analyze the new stranger as fast as possible to find out as much as I can to turn the tide in my favor. The woman has an uncanny grin plastered on her face and she extends her hand, making me feel uneasy. She wears a green jacket with cat ears, a with Shirt and short pants, with short, browns hair, red eyes and a big, ugly scar running though her right face, making it ugly and gross to look at. I have definitely seen prettier women in my life.

"**Heya, my name's [redacted] . Nice to meet you."** she says, offering a handshake. Lux's movement to take the handshake stops as he hesitates. I stand frozen too for a moment, intensely staring at

her. What the fuck? I didn't understand any of this! What kind of language is that?! As Lux and I are bothered with that weird ass pronunciation, my 'Mate' doesn't seem bothered at all. The woman's expression changes slightly, but I cannot read if it is for the better or the worse.
"**Oh, I am not that good at English, my name is [redacted] . My pronouns are she/her.**" she repeats and I don't understand.
"Excuse me, what?"
"**[redacted]** ."
"Huh?"
"**[redacted]** "
"**MY NAME IS [redacted] GODDAMNIT YOU IDIOT**!" she says, sounding otherworldly and aggressive. I actively take a step back, sweating, my knees getting soft. That is quite scary... My 'Mate' is now also actively trying to calm her down. The woman takes some deep breaths and looks at us with utter disappointment. What a weird interaction...
"**My apologies. I didn't mean to lash out like this. I tend to be... rather impatient**." she mutters and swiftly turns to my 'Mate' suddenly having an orange, messy scarf in her hands. I stand in shock as the piece of clothing is way bigger than herself. HOW?! WHERE DID SHE TAKE THAT FROM SO SUDDENLY?! The other tall figure seems surprised, yet very please, he takes the scars and puts it on. Woah, it really fits him! She then extents her hand towards us again. I notice Lux from the corner of my eye mentally preparing, tensing up all his muscles and eyes the stranger carefully before he took the Handshake first.
"Uh... I am Luxembourg, call me Lux, that is easier and shorter." He introduces himself. The woman nods, seemingly satisfied with his answer. Then she turns to me. A sudden wave of anxiety washes over me. Not only because of what just happened, I am literally crumbling! How am I supposed to win my crush's heart when a person like this is in the way! I try to remain calm and friendly, as usual, to not show my disturbance. Yet I quickly look at her up and down too, stopping at I make eye contact. I look her in the eyes- well, one of them, the left one, right from my side. My heart stops beating for a second. She seems rather interested and intrigued at first glance, but behind the friendly glow of her eye is only a lifeless coldness, murderous intents even. Nothing there- it's not real. Like she is hating to see us even exist. This worries me even more.

Especially about what kind of people I am getting involved with. Only now it dawns on me what kind of a person my 'Mate' could be if he is seemingly very close to someone like this. My heart almost breaks and I throw a glance to him as well, yet his simply smile and silently encourages me. I take a deep breath and get takes back to current events and someone is (loudly) clearing their throat. She is faking her excitement- but why? Is she only faking towards me? Does she already see me as a threat against her relationship with him? Or am I just overthinking?! There are too many questions.
"**Uh... are you there**?" she asks and I shake my head to concentrate on current event. I need to talk to me 'Mate' later though. Definitely! I feel the aggression bubbling inside me again as I eye her in the same way she does. Oh well, you're acting? Guess what, I can do that as well.
"Yeah- sorry- I'm Indonesia- or Indo, if that is better!" I take her hand and smile. She nods again, satisfied. But how satisfied is she really with that mask that she is carrying with her expressions. My 'Mate' shakes his friend's shoulder a bit and then points at Lux. Lux eyes widen a bit and we are both taken back. What are they doing now? I don't like this situation at all. Since she showed up! No... since Lux showed up! Damnit! The woman eyes Lux too, carefully, just like my 'Mate' did, the entire time actually. I don't get what is so special about Luxembourg! Don't leave me out like this! She narrows her eyes and then nods.
"**Well, I will be damned if you aren't right about that, my friend. Was thinking about that too. The similarity is uncanny!**" She mutters, and the taller stranger nods, as if he was wondering this the entire time already.

"**Lux, you seem quite familiar actually.**" The woman speaks out, pointing at him- her expression narrowing, as if she's trying to remember something.
"But we've never met before...?" Lux slowly says, visibly confused. Honestly, I still don't like where this is going, but I am also intrigued.
"**Do you have a brother maybe?**"
"I do... or did." Lux sighs, defeated and sad, and I remember the even at the beach. My brain is flooding with information, trying to follow the conversation. The woman leans back, glaring to my 'Mate'.

"**Netherlands, do you remember this man that we met? He was like Lux, but taller. Like you.**" she remembers herself, looking at my 'Mate'. He nods- agreeing. Wait, so he got a name after all? And he responds to that name? But I thought my 'Mate' couldn't remember-
"W-What was his name?!" Lux stammers and I get what he is saying. A person like him, but taller. A relative. Dutch Republic is alive. WIC and VOC are dead, and the others who are similar, like Paraguay or Croatia are still here... only Netherlands is missing. I pause for a moment, seemingly realizing. Well, there aren't much options left.
'Excuse me. What?!'
I stand there in mild shock, while anger forms in my stomach. There is no way.

Netherlands has been missing for over **70 YEARS**, AND THEN TWO RANDOM PEOPLE SHOW UP AND AGREE ON KNOWING HIM?! WHAT KIND OF RIDICULOUSNESS IS THIS?! I stare at both of them, hardly believe a word she's saying. She seems oddly calm about this whole thing, but she is weird to begin with. I feel that Lux feels the same way as I do- maybe even more intense. What a terrible feeling for him, they are family after all.
"**Nope, I don't remember**." My 'Mate's friend shrugs and it feels like I got hit with a brick, right in the face. *ARE YOU SERIOUS?!* I remain quiet, they remain quiet, Lux remains quiet. The woman senses the rising awkwardness that is slowly replacing the shock and continues to speak, seemingly unimpressed.
"**He was in a terrible state though. He's probably dead.**" she says with a monotone voice but I can hear that she doesn't care a single bit. What an awful person. I again get worried on who my 'Mate' really is. Again, I need to have a deep conversation with him later. Alone. In private.

"So... you... knew my brother?" Lux asks then, his voice about to shatter.
"Well, yeah, we travelled for a month or so before parting ways. He got a little better yet I doubt that he'd survived on his own much longer." the stranger sighs and looks at me, reading my expression. Luxembourg hangs his head down.
"I see." He expresses, sounding tired and his voice is very quiet. My

'Mate' turns his head away as the silence gets deafening once more. It stays silent for a good while. This feeling is so weird. I believe this is the final say that the Netherlands is finally... dead. Gone. I supposed that I'd feel happy when the day comes, yet that just isn't the case anymore. I just feel a little hollow. But I hate this feeling. I want this to be gone. I knew I should have expected that- Netherlands official Death- but it seems to hit me hard, to my own surprise. I look over to Lux. He stands there, broken. Right... he always tried believing that everything would turn out ok. It must be utterly horrible for him. The female stranger looks at him and sighs, as if getting read to put on a façade.
"**Sorry for the-**" she starts- but Lux backs up at bit, turning his head away from everyone, trying to hid his expression. His body is shaking.
"I-I knew this was coming- why does it hurt so bad?" he asks himself loud- his voice shaking. Lux smiles with a devastating expression in his eyes. Well, now I feel bad.

The woman watches Lux carefully, she almost seems annoyed. That's disrespectful! It's uncomfortable, to say the least. I feel my 'Mate' being really uncomfortable next to her as well. Heavy situation. The silence stays deafening, only the wind and the sound of leaves dancing within it guide the surrounding atmosphere. I believe it'll get awkward for me in a few moments. The woman looks to my 'Mate' and lays her hand onto his shoulder and I stiffen up. She can just do that?! I'm gonna be outclassed! Urgh! Nothing is going right today! So many bad news by Allah! I narrow my eyes. Then, the small woman; even I am taller, clears her throat, turning to *him*. What now?!
"So, 'my friend', uh, since we reunited, you want to start travelling again?" she questions and my heart sinks. They want to leave?! But what about me? I want to get to know him, to feel him! While Lux was in his own bubble- traumatized, I simply glare at them. No... No, no, no! They cannot do that! I- The tall man carefully turns his head from her to me and now we look at each other. I'm not sure what happened afterwards, yet maybe he spotted the desperation in my eyes, because he turns to his 'friend' and shakes his head. The woman is surprised at his statement.
"What? You want to remain here longer? Why?"
My 'Mate' makes some gestures that I cannot understand. The other

stranger scoffs and rolls her one eye.
"**Tch... if you say so. Alright. Sure.**" she accepts and I need a moment to process the information as a sparkle of hopes makes itself wide within me. So, they aren't leaving?! That is, that is awesome! Perhaps I got another chance! Just as my emotional status was getting better again, Lux starts talking, throwing me back into the reality of things.

"I... I need to go- sorry. Uh... until next time." a depressed Lux says his goodbyes and leaves quickly. I look his way as he is going and still feel a bit bad for him. I mentally shake my head. Yeah, it might be sad, but I have other stuff to worry about! As I turn my head back, the woman is suddenly way closer to me. Way closer than I'd like her to. How the fuck did she sneak up on me like this?! I glare at her with a self-defending expression and she exhales, seemingly annoying with me reaction.
"**Is there a chance that I can stay at your place too?**"

The 'Mate's POV

The picture of Indo's desperate expression is burned into my mind. I had already expected that I'd be meeting her very soon, and now she is here. Finally. I can breathe and relax in her shadow. She even wanted to leave again, which was a comforting thought... until I saw Indonesia looking at me this way. I am not sure what exactly it is, yet I felt bad for leaving, he seems desperate for me to stay. Not sure if that is good, it made me hesitate though. Hesitant enough to stay. He seems happy about that. Oh Indo, if you only knew, you'd hate me, and I hate myself for it too. You are just building up to experience pain once again. It feels nice to be accepted by my people, even though I stay hidden. I look up into the sky from inside Phil's house. It's evening now, and I just reflect on the day. Indo is cooking with Phil and Malay is streaming to the internet. I allow myself to sigh heavily. In fact, I have really mixed feelings about this day, and about what happened. I'm glad they haven't figured out the correlation between my 'amnesia' and me actually 'remembering' someone, making my former statement a big lie. That would make all a mess. Well, more than it already is. On one side, I'm happy that she found her way back and clarified uh... the Netherlands- as 'dead'- that's all I wanted, at least for now, yet on the other side... I hate to see Luxembourg suffer like that... was he still searching? In fact-

As the 'news' spread, to my own surprise, even some of the others seem to be actually taken back by them. I don't understand them at all. Why? Why are they sad? It's been over 70 years. Maybe I could ask her about that- like to go talk to them about the reasons for me or something. Luckly, MalPhilIndo, actually just Phil as he owns the house, had agreed on letting her stay at their house too, we are sharing the guestroom. Now everyone in the house is doing other things, I wonder what is going on in their minds? It doesn't seem like anyone wants to talk or start a conversation or anything. The air is heavy from today's events.

I sigh and get up from the couch I was sitting on and make my way upstairs to the guestroom, hoping to find her there. I open the door, and see her standing on the small balcony which is attached to the room. I close the door and lock it (just for safety), walking over and on the balcony, leaning against the railing as well as she does. I watch her gazing into the distance, unreactive. Must be the inner demons. Soon, I look over into the distance as well. It's much nicer than the void. We silently stand next to each other. The evening sun is glaring over us, showing us in a warm, yellow coat, warming my body through my coat. All in all, very peaceful. There is a soft, salty breeze and the sound of wind brushing leaves lays gently in the air, floating by. Yet, it is a tense atmosphere, in my opinion. For an area like this, maybe it is a bit too quiet, no animals are heard, not even the seagulls. Perhaps it's just me and my nerves right now. I don't know. Strange.
I know I haven't said a word in some time- and I know that I can speak with her- And I feel like letting the things keeping me down out by talking, yet somehow, I hesitated to speak. My throat is closed and my heads floats above the clouds, weighing my options. Both of them sound equally good. It's hard to talk, sometimes. But also, the voices are needed to be heard. I experienced it many times where people either should not and should have talked. I take my sweet, needed time to gather myself and my thoughts to make a decision; in the end, I manage to break through my mental barrier and speak up for the times time in a week. It has already been a week since I've been here?
"...What an eventful day..." I say, soft and quietly, my voice almost drowning in the breeze. My throat feels rough as I haven't used my vocal cords. She turns her head- looking at me with a gaze of attention.
"So you still can talk, after all."
"I did not want to around... you know."
"Yeah, I figured already. It's good to see you again, had me

worried for a moment." *she responds as quiet as I did, yet the wind didn't carry her voice away. I tilt my head to her.*
"You don't worry about anything."
"You got me there."
"The illusion is nice though. It seems like you actually care about me."
"Who says I don't? ~"
"We both know that."

There is a pause from both of us. The uncomfortable silence from the nature doesn't better it for me.
"To be honest, I didn't intent to send you here, exactly." *she then reveals, sighing, annoyed. I can imagine why. I'd be mad- but for some reasons I wasn't- I only felt my calming, double heartbeat in my chest.*
"Well it was quite the battle. You probably haven't had the time to think about it."
"True. Haven't had something like this for 1000 years, it was fun though~ being backed into a corner like this." *she chuckles and I sigh. I don't see why anyone would enjoy that.*
"Well, at least I survived. My scar opened up though. That was awful."
"It did?!"
"Don't worry, the recovery abilities from you are doing their job, and the other countries helped me as well."
"And they have no idea who you are?"
"I think so."
"Idiots. They are dense. In my opinion it is quite oblivious. Can you still use my magic?"
"Yeah, I can use your energy for flames."
"Good that the contract still works."
"Mhm." I stare off into the distance, pulling up a small flame to demonstrate. She looks at it and nods and I let it disappear again. I smile a bit. She isn't much of an emotional person, not at all actually, but she is trying to seem as normal as possible. I mean she isn't even human.
"Not mad at me or anything?" *Liana breaks the silence. I shrug.*
"Not really."
"And the rest?"
"I am... not sure."
"You got any plans?"
"Perhaps..."

I sigh.
"How long do you plan to stay like this?"
"Hm?"
"In this form? You are so uncanny for all."
"Well I couldn't show up as a country now, could I?"
"I- "
"How else am I supposed to blend in? I cannot show up as the void that I am can I?"
"..."
"There."
"Couldn't your appearance have been... a little more normal to a human?"
"Now what is that supposed to mean?"
"I... never mind." I sigh. There is no way to talk sense into her. She remains above me and there is nothing I can do other to follow and persuade her.

Another pause, as it stays quiet as we continuously watch the sunset.
"I still don't understand why you would want to spend another moment here."
"I have my reasons."
"Like Death?"
"What?"
"What?"
"So what do you need? Or are you just here for something simple like talking?" *she asks like nothing happened. I sigh again.*
"Actually, I don't really know how to think... about all that is going on." I start. I feel like I'm finally getting her full attention now.
"**Okay? It's that complex? I thought you already dealt with those before?**" *she asks, confused, not being the best with complex feelings. I nod, inhale heavily, and tell her- I tell her basically everything I got on my mind right now. I talk and talk and as I start, I seem to find it hard to stop.*
"You see, I'm glad that my plan in not being recognized worked and stuff, but I feel worse for letting him suffer, I think he was still searching for me." I start, trying to put my mind into words.
"I noticed. What an idiot." *she replied.*
"Shut up! Don't talk badly about him!"
"Yes, yes. Go on."
"... Well, on the other hand I don't get why the countries here react the

way they do. They are so negative about it."
"Elaborate."
"Like- I don't understand, you've seen... uh- Indonesia's reaction for example, he was shocked, taken back, even!"
"I have taken note that you seem to have this 'Indonesia' on your mind a lot, Mhm?"
"What?!"
"Don't even deny it."
"He hates me with all his soul!" I say- probably a bit louder than intended- making me shut up immediately. Those spoken words teared me downhill, and suddenly I felt like crying... my friend raises her eyebrows.
"It doesn't quite seem like that to me."
"If he knew- "
"But it has been quite the time."

There was a little bit of silence, and I was busy rethinking everything. The entire time I've been here Indonesia was with me and I was scared that he suspected something, yet she is making fair points... and the way Indo looked. I sigh deeply and hang my head low. Does he care? He has been on my mind all week. Even if, if he only knew- all would be ruined! Should I give in or not? As I feel overwhelmed, she pats my shoulder, clearly ready to let this conversation go. A wave of mixed feelings overruns me and I start shaking. She takes notice.
"Let's go inside and keep the door locked, close the curtains."
She ends.
"W-why?" I ask back, my voice shaking.
"Listen, I can see that your mental stability has reached a new low, you are stiff from the stress. I feel like you should just let it out. If you like, we can go somewhere else where no one can find you like this- I know you hate it." *she explains, and I immediately felt a bit better.*
"Here is okay, thanks."
With those words we go inside. She closes the curtains and I sit on the bed, warping myself in the blanket, my vision gets blurry. She proceeded to quietly sit down on the bed- next to me, watching me. Eventually, I start to cry silently, not being able to emotionally deal with the situation. They hated me, and they won't like me if they find out, it'll all repeat. And now I've even started warming up again, so it'll be worse!

Even though I was crying, it helped that I wasn't alone. Luckly, I am able to keep myself together relatively well, so it wasn't a complete breakdown, like the day Indo had scared me and I went into full panic mode. After a while I started calming a little, I hope the others haven't noticed or they're going to worry. My eyes are burning from crying. They wander over to her. Her expression seems puzzled.
"?" I give her a silent, questioning look- my head still feeling really dense. Tiredness is setting in too.
"Ah, no worries, just thinking about your words. I'm not sure if I understand their meaning, and your next steps concerning them." *She explains- seeming like a philosopher.*
"Oh okay."
"Do you, uh, like him or something?"
"Huh?"
"I'm just trying to make sense out of mortals. Is that why you are reacting that sensible to him being around?" *she mumbles, more thinking loudly than actually chatting with me.*
"I just don't know..." I say- she turns her head to me, looking directly at me. I grab and hug a pillow. To my defense and comfort.
"Don't get me wrong, I was relieved..." I add to my previous sentence. Again, silence. She sighs.
"**So, can we erase all of this? Finally?**"
"What?! No!" I whisper yell. She simply blinks and I retract my sentence.
"W-Well, not yet at least. I am not ready to let go..." I carefully say.
"Fine... whatever makes you happy." *she sighs.*
"Yes! I have things and emotions to figure out!" I say- sounding surprisingly determined for my current state. I sense something from my companion, but I couldn't identify what it was... damn, stupid headache...
"You know... we have time. We can stay here for a bit longer if you like." *she turns her head away.* I look at her a little longer before I sigh and get up. I should go to the bathroom and freshen up.

Done as told, I get up and walk over to the door. I hear her laying down on the bed in the frustration that she has. She doesn't like other people but really, she could be a little more content about it. As I reach for the door knob, I get stopped again.
"Oh yeah, you need to watch out. I believe Indo has laid an eye on you, if you know what I mean." *She sighs, annoyed, and I*

cannot overhear the way her voice hardens. I freeze for a moment.
"What?!"
"You heard me. Better be careful with that piece of sh- " *I don't even hear the rest of it. There is NO WAY that she can be right. It'd lead to so much disaster if he found out. My heart sinks further. Is Indo really interested in me? No, he's not. He is interested in the mystery that I present myself as, surely. I sigh loudly.*
"Okay, okay. I WILL watch out for that possibility. I'll be right be." I mumble and turn the door knob, walking out the guest room.

My face is really burning right now. She must be kidding.

8| A Secret Revealed

Indonesia's POV

The alarm clock on my night stand clicks, silently and I watch the hand for the seconds move, completely silent myself. I'm sitting on my bed, philosophizing over the things that happened today and over my feelings- ending in me having a conversation with my brain. In other situation I might have considered myself insane, yet now there isn't any room for that kind of thoughts. The shock still runs through my veins. It's not strong, but uncomfortable. Perhaps because I did Netherlands for a long time, but he is a bad person after all.
So that begs the question:

"Why am I so taken back by Neth's official death?"
'You looked up to him even though you got colonized idiot.' My inner thoughts answer me, yet I am having none of that. No way I let my thoughts betray me and my pride like that, it's stupid! Yet, my brain keeps rambling in the most cringe way possible.
'You got to be honest with yourself, he was quite good looking too, don't you think?' the inner voice says, presenting me with a picture of Netherlands, causing me to flush up for a moment and violently shake my head.
"Don't show me those stupid imagines! He murdered my father, my brothers, my people! How could I ever forgive someone like him?! He had no idea what it was like! – "
'Now, now, we both know that this isn't completely too. Those were bloody times and we cannot forget how bad they were, I totally agree with you, myself, yet realistically, we got to look at the Netherland's own loses. For example; his family had their own independence war, after all.'
"Stupid."
'I already stated that it does not excuse his behavior in the past.'
"Then why are going through this then?!"
'Because Netherlands grew as a person and tried to make it up to you as

best as he could. He tried changing for the better afterwards, even his personality had a 180 turn after World Wars.'
"Because he finally got colonized himself or what?"
'I don't know the cause, I am your brain. I am just saying that it was perhaps wrong that we never acknowledged his willingness to change himself and make his deeps right.'
"There is no way he 'could have made it up' to me after doing genocide." *I argue, getting impatient and furious with myself.*
'But I think we could have handled this situation better than simply ignoring it.'
"You are my brain; you realistically don't think. I am just making your voice up. You sound exactly like me too."
'Then why did you made me up in the first place?' my thoughts ask and I am forced to pause for a moment from my angry rambling. I still feel angry at myself, yet there also is some self-doubt. It's true that I've never let Netherlands speak with me, but it hasn't been long enough that I am ready to even think about it.
'I can hear you, you know, it has been 174 Years, how long would you have planned to wait anyways?'
"STOP THAT- " I scoff. Not even safe from my own thoughts, ah Allah.
"I refuse to believe that it is partly my fault that I am shocked at the news. I cannot victim blame myself. I cannot believe you are betraying me like this!"
'I am literally you. I am your moral Code.'
"Shut up."
'I am just saying that now, where it is too late already, we could start trying to figure out how much we actually can forgive and how much not.'
"The amount is Zero. There, done!"
'You are always so dense and hard to work with. You'll have to do it eventually.'
"Do you realize how stupid this sounds?"
'You keep telling yourself that, yet I strongly believe that this step is necessary for our personal growth.'
"Stop talking to me, please."
'I will not.'
"You'll stop talking to me."
'Take it into consideration.'
"SHUT- "

I force my eyes off the clock and I grab my phone in attempt to distract myself. Stupid thoughts, always disturbing me with useless stuff. I scroll through social media a bit, I don't get why Twitter is X now, apparently. I end up in my gallery, looking at a selfie I took a few days ago: Me, Mal, Phil and our new friend. It makes me smile a little yet my thoughts wander back to today... this woman. I don't like her. She is not only uncanny but I feel like she is rude. Why do they spend so much time together? I hate it.
I hate it even more that I barely know him, yet I am so interested. In him as a mystery, but as a person too. He is mute yet so soft and kind. Butterflies dance in my stomach for a moment before the harsh reality almost makes me vomit. Why did she have to come and ruin it all? How am I supposed to get close with him now, eh?
I sigh and lay down, my phone on the sheets besides me. I swear I heard him crying again, just a few minutes ago. It was so quiet and so unnoticeable, yet it was there. This woman comforted him- I heard her mumbling. I didn't understand a word though because of the wall. I scoff in my own pool of jealousness. That should have been me!
I don't like that, but I can't change that I guess...
What if they're dating...?
...they are even sharing a room. They didn't have to, yet the chose to do so.
What a red flag for me. And what if they decide to- I cut my own thoughts off, almost afraid to finish them fully, the realization dawning on me what else could be. To be completely honest, this day cannot get any worse! That's the problem with being in love, I guess. So... I really am in love? This is so awkward. You get jealous really fast. Who could have known that the term 'love' can be so complex with feelings instant of just 'loving' someone in bed? I'm just a mass idiot- not thinking with my brain, aren't I? But to be fair, I never really experienced this before.

I only had Sex education at school, and that barely, also some one-night stands with others, which is far in the past. I haven't had Sex since we all are locked up in here. They all say that people loving each other sleep together. It's nothing like what I'm going through right now! What a scam! What hasn't anyone told me?! Damn you, universe in giving one of the typical 'love-lives' like in all those stupid books. Or am I in reality TV? Where are the cameras? There

is just so much new to learn...
After a few moments of depressing silence and me being simply overwhelmed I feel something wet strolling down my cheek. Hm? Still staring at the ceiling, I touch my cheek, sighing. And now I'm crying, great. Never thought I'd get emotional over a not dead person like this, Allah, I'm pathetic. I close my eyes and surprisingly my 'moral code' doesn't jump at me like it said it would and I lay there in peace.
Minutes later someone knocked at my door. Who is that? I wipe my tears away and sit up.

"Come in." I half yell, hearable done with myself and the world and without any motivation. The door slowly opens and I watch none other than him himself, my 'Mate' spying through the half open door. The cause of all my problems that I like so much. My heartbeat is already spiking. He seems a bit stressed and/or nervous, I think it's clear that he is recovering from another breakdown, such as myself. Oh great, at this rate I'm sure it's my fault again. He closes the door very quietly, walks over to me and sits down on the bed.

We look at each other in silence and I feel my heart in my chest. Now he is this close again. I should feel excited about this, but with my currently mood I just can't.

He tilts his head at me, his expression being surprise. My brain had shut down after starting those depressing thoughts, so I look confused at him- not realizing why he looks so shocked, almost flustered even. My 'Mate' pointed at me in question before running his finger down his cheek, in a tearing-like motion. I inhale, but say nothing and turn my head away. Right, I was crying, how embarrassing. I can't even look at him like this, and he shouldn't see me like this. From the corner of my eye, I notice him motioning something yet I ignore it, stubborn.
'He clearly wants something from you' my brains suddenly speaks again and I sigh, not ready to argue again. In that light, my eyes wander over to him. I'm not sure what happened, but suddenly the other man turned awkward, very awkward. He motions something that could be considered as 'what happened' and I'm sure I should answer that.

'You should, I think we want to open up to him. Then he can comfort us and warm up at the same time.' My brain condenses a genius plan. I hate and love my thoughts. Also, I wonder if my head really is on my side or not. I gulp heavily.

"I, uh, was just processing some stuff." I carefully say, turning my eyes away again. The silence afterwards was expected, yet it felt unsatisfying.
"You know, because of the sudden news."
"..."
"Like, I never liked the Netherlands one single bit, more of the opposite, he's done terrible things to me and others for centuries."
"..."
"Yet, I feel like there is more to it. The thoughts bother me so much." I sigh, not really understanding myself. Stupid moral code. It should be over; I shouldn't think about it more. I feel weight lifting from the mattress. Carefully I look around and see him taking an empty pad of papers and one of my pens. He proceeds to sits on the edge of my bed again. The tall man seems rather tense as he writes.
-Can you tell me more about Netherlands? -
"Uhm." I hesitate for a moment.
"Sure." I say and he looks at me intensely. I feel a boulder in my stomach every time I talk about that asparagus.
"He's done awful things to me and my lands in the past, for centuries. I don't know why I am so bothered about it now that he is officially dead."
-And why didn't anyone like him after all that? -
"How do you know?"
-I met him, remember? – it feels weird knowing that my friend here knew Netherlands personally too.
"Well no one liked him anyways. He was obnoxious. And since I am popular everyone took my stand and not his. Such a desperate loser." I hiss between my teeth.
-Really? When I met him, he was everything but obnoxious- I read. I remember my thoughts talking about the personality shift and I simply scoff loud and annoyed.
-Sorry... -
"It was just because you didn't know him and he had a chance!" I say in desperation, knowing that it is just a lie. My 'Mate' flinches, shaking a little. He seems almost devastated.

-So... no one ever liked him? -
"Yes. What an asshole."
-Even though he regretted it? -
"Well..."
-What a sad way to go out. -
"..." I watch him lower his shoulders. I wonder what his relationship to Netherlands was?

"Did... you like him?" I ask after a short pause, almost shy. There is another one, yet he nods. I feel a sting in my heart and I lightly bite my tongue.
"What was he like in your view?" I ask, suddenly really impatient for the answer and I watch him write, almost desperate to get the piece of paper in my hands.
-He was quite awkward and very apologetic all the time. Yet he smiled a lot. Seeing what happened he now, I believe he endured quite the trauma. I feel like everyone here had trauma without any therapy. – I read. I read it again. And a third time. I open my mouth and close it without saying anything. That is how Neth behaved? Crazy to think that...
'I told you we never acknowledged it.' yeah, yeah, shut up. I look up from the paper and take deeps breaths. This is a lot to take in. But I refuse to believe that I have the right to forgive him, even if he is dead. I glare at the other person for a while. I wonder what his face looks like. It surely is handsome.

"I really don't want to talk about him anymore, is that ok? The topic is still very sensitive and aggravating to me." I scoff. Luckily, he silently agrees
"Ah, on this account, can I ask you something else?" I ask without thinking, remembering the day around a week ago, when we met. He lifts his head, looking at me with attention. I like that feeling.
"I don't remember if I asked before, but where did you get that injury from? The one... you know." I motion the scar he's got across my own chest. Immediately, the guy is extremely bothered about it.
- I don't want to talk about that. -
"Please?"
- No. -
"But- " I try to get an answer but he shakes his head aggressively, not before suddenly pulling his hood further down his face. I flinch

too. Oh no, I've been too pushy again.
"A-Ah, my apologies. I won't push the narrative further." I say and he sighs, in a deep tone. Oh my. I watch him turning his back to me as he sits on the edge of my bed, head low.

It stays silent.

The silence returns to the deafening state from before.

It's really bad.

In an afford to stir break things up I shuffle next to him on the edge and we sit there together, silently sharing our thoughts. The situation is difficult. What do I do know is the question. After a while my 'Mate' straightens up and, I believe, side eyeing me. I wonder what he thinks about me now. Does he not like me now, that I voiced my experience about his former friend? My stomach turns in all the wrong ways thinking about Neth already, adding him now into the mix makes everything worse.
Then something happened which I never accounted for: he laid his hand on my shoulder. I deflate beneath the touch and emotions start overwhelming me again, my vision getting blurry. I thought that after all I'd never get this emotional over myself again, yet here we are. I sigh and do another unthinkable thing; I take the risk and lean towards his shoulder, similar to the way I fell asleep once. To my own surprise he lets me, and the soft yet firm fabric of his coat touches my cheek. I just realize how strong it must be, I wonder how he didn't get a heat stroke yet. Oh well.

We remain like this, both sharing some sort of trauma or suffering from the past. It makes me feel lighter and more relaxed, which is very nice. I close my eyes and simply breathe. I don't know how much time passed, but soon I feel his arm moving over my back and then fingers in my hair, they are shaking, but not stopping regardless. My heart rate shoots through the roof and my cheeks burns, yet I neither open my eyes nor flinch. I CAN'T believe he is doing that! Al Allah! Thank you! This is exactly what I need! Him playing with my hair is really relaxing even though all I hear is my own heart beat in my ears.

Just embrace the moment while you can Indo, God damn perhaps

this isn't the worst day all year after all! So much attention to me, I love it.
I sigh, relieved, relaxing further. Finally, that damn Dutch isn't in my mind anymore, just my dear friend here who is so kind and soft and sweet and-

He stops, leaving me sad. Why did you stop so sudden? It was just getting good. I feel him hastily fudging away from me and I am forced to straighten up again.
- Ah, I'm so sorry! -
"What? No, uhm, I liked it." I stammer. He is now really surprised and his hands do unregulated, unpredictable motions, as if he couldn't believe it. My cheeks keep burning all the way through it. I suddenly remember that Phil suggested once that I get to know him better... and he are clean with each other right now, and alone.
I, perhaps, should just go for it.

"Hey uh- Mate?" I look up at him, right next to me. Before I even continue my eyes wander over his appearance again, I simply couldn't help myself: light colored, also a bit worn and yellowish, with a blue moon sickle over the right side. His face his covered in shadows and has dark blue skin. All in all, kind of soothing and calming. Not to mention that, in addition, he now got that very long, fluffy, messy deeply orange scarf. He got it from this woman when they reunited. I figured he had 'lost' it when they were separated. Yet it fits him well. He is so mysterious and who really is he? And who is she? I have so many questions! My 'Mate' looks at me, his gesture telling me to continue. I softly shake my head to regain focus and inhale, getting ready for my question.
"I've wondered from the beginning: Who exactly are you? And who is she? I-I didn't want to ask her because I felt like that would she, uhm, would be rude about it." I awkwardly ask, yet very curious. My 'Mate' tilts his head, processing the question. I quickly inhale sharply.
"Ah! Uhm, please don't tell her I said that!" I gulp and he quickly shakes his head, raising his hands. I exhale. Good, at least that. I watch as he takes the pad and the pen again, yet he seems hesitant to write, or is he perhaps just thinking? I patiently wait for once. Then he handed me the paper.

- Well, I don't remember that much. I am a simple traveler and she is traveling with me. –
"When did you meet her?"
- At least a few decades -
"May I... ask what kind of relationship you two have?"
- We are well acquainted. – I internally scoff. Now that didn't tell me anything about their relationship.
"And... how old are you two?" I ask- then, again, writing.
- Oh- I'm pretty old, but not that old. I lost count but I feel very young. I know from her that she stopped counting as she knew she's old enough to do anything she wants. How old are you? -
"Eh- it's pretty similar. We have the year 2119 now, which makes me 252 years old. But I'm kind of young on the spectrum of countries." I laugh, awkwardly. I wonder how much our age gap really is? I watch him nod and I tilt my head.
"Uhm, when is your birthday?" I try making small talk while gathering information on the mysterious man that I like.
- Oh, well, no one really was interested in my birthday for a long time. It's the 26th of July. What about you? -
"Oh, mine's the 17th of August." I reply, trying to sound a little cheerier. I fold my head over my neck again and fumble with my hands.
"Are you okay with me asking you those questions?"
- I have to admit that it is refreshing. -
"Oh, may we continue?"
- Sure! – I try to control my grinning, feeling a lot happier than before. This conversation is really going great! That is giving me opportunities like never before! Okay, okay! Let's do that!
'Please don't mess this up for the both of us.'
"I won't, shut up."
'Yeah. Yeah. Sure.'

"So, you said you're a traveler, where have you been already?" I decide to ask next, bringing the conversation into a closed circle and showing him that I have paid attention to his words, uh, texts. He is thinking for a good minute.
- You wouldn't believe me. -
"Don't write that, surely I believe it!"
- You'll think I'm crazy. -
"Please, tell me." I beg with puppy eyes. My 'Mate' sighs heavily.

- Well, I came from another world. -
"You are joking right? there is no way-" I start, but was cut off as he looks at me, being very serious. I shut myself up and gulp. He said I wouldn't believe it, and it's true that it sounds very surreal.
"You... aren't joking? Okay- I mean- you said you weren't going to. Uhm alright, I believe you." I reply awkwardly. As long he is happy, I will play along. He doesn't seem like he is believing me either but doesn't further comment on it. My mind already lingers at the next topic, or rather, again at the topic of him and her relationship. I again gathered all my remaining mental strength.
"Okay, so, weird question but, which gender are you attracted to? I am not phobic against any identification and you really don't have to answer if you don't want to." I regret asking that immediately afterwards. I made my intentions bluntly oblivious, haven't I? Now he definitely knows I have interest in him, but is that bad?
- Well, what is YOUR sexuality? – I blink at the paper, then at him, embarrassed.
"Uh- I'm- I'm Bisexual..." I awkwardly say- damnit I feel my cheeks heating up again
"A-And you?"
- I figured that out a while ago, men are just hotter than gals. So, I'm gay, I guess. -
"Ah, okay. That is great for you" We sit there awkwardly for a few moments, also the fact that openly talked about it so easily but damn, now I'm cooking. I feel really happy inside. I just catch myself before anything happens
'INDONESIA, FOCUS! CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION!'

I clear my throat as now my 'Mate' takes the initiative.
- I've been here for like a week, but what is life like here, so isolated? -
"It's quiet. I do miss my people and my lands but I guess it's better for all if we aren't weaponized."
- Weaponized? -
"Countries don't simply die like normal humans and there is so much differences. We don't fit in. The World Wars made it clear how dangerous it is when one almost immortal person leads a whole nation."
- I see. Sorry. -
"Ah, it's okay. I just don't like politics that much. So, I'm very fine with living here."

- Makes sense. -
"But away from the rest of the world. I got one other thing I'd like to know for now, uhm." I announce, chuckling nervous a little. "And I'm sorry if it is private or if I've asked this before too, but why do you keep hiding your face all the time? I mean no one here would know who you are, you other worldly being." I joke, still laughing nervous. He doesn't like private questions like this but I cannot help the utter curiosity. My 'Mate' seems a bit uncomfortable, but writes eventually away.
'I don't like showing it. I don't like my face, the colors or even my eyes. Also, you wouldn't like me at all if you saw it.' That hit me a bit. I haven't realized that his self-confidence is THAT low. It's sad, but I need to accept it. Perhaps if we get closer.
"It's alright- but I'm sure your face is beautiful- I- I MEAN- what?" and I'm stuttering again. Can't I stop messing up? Yet, he cracks a small smile.

Thanks- that was really sweet of you :)' He hands me the paper, chuckling a bit, again in this deep, almost raspy tone. It gives me goose bumps. I feel like dying right now. But the feeling is also nice.

I was 'saved' as someone knocks at my door AGAIN. A lot of knocks in such a short time. We both turn our head to the door. It slowly opens, Mal and Phil stand in front of it.
"Ah, hello. Sorry to interrupt you two. Indo? We- we need to talk- alone." Phil said and looked at my 'Mate' with an usure glare. He tilts his head, then nods- understanding that they want him out the room, stands up, waves with his small smile at me and leaves the room. Mal looks after him, closing, even locking the door.
Suddenly, the air tenses up, almost heavier than before. Oh. What a ride today is. First good, then bad, then good again, and now worse, I guess. Both look rather serious. I have a bad feeling about that. Something bad is gonna happen... Phil walks to the now locked down, and leans against it. Mal stands in the middle of the room while I still sit on my bed.

"So- what's up?" I break the ice, trying to be ready for everything they could hit me with.
"Indo... it's about the dude, our new friend." Mal starts. I feel my heart drop. Suddenly I don't feel ready at all.

"What about him?"

"He is a **liar**. He is not mute at all!" Malaysia says, leaving me in horror.

9| Figuring Out

Philippines's POV

I lean against the door, making sure it's locked, that no one would enter or listen. We three aren't alone in this house anymore, after all. The woman seems nice on the surface but something about her makes me a bit uneasy. If it is just the appearance or something more? Indo clearly doesn't like her, he said her character is rotten, yet I wouldn't go as far to say the same yet. Indo is the type of person who is very emotional and circumlocutory. And our walls are thin, if you stand at the door, you hear the steps from someone who's walking past the room or even up the stairs. Around 15 minutes ago, the tragedy struck: Mal came to me, he likes spending his time on our deck whenever he isn't making online content. The deck in beneath the balcony of our guest room. So, it was a shock to him and also me when he told me that he heard our nameless man talk, or- at least mumble with our new guest from the balcony, while he was chilling beneath them.

So, both of the strangers are keeping secrets from us. I'm not sure if I should be concerned about letting them stay here or not, anymore. Malay said he didn't understand a thing from both of them, which is really sad to be honest. I would have loved to hear what they two are so secretive about. I look at Indo, who is sitting on his bed, and at Malay, who is standing in the middle of the room. Indo stares at him in shock and confusion. It doesn't seem like he fully believes it. That's understandable. And he was just chatting with him too. I already spot the pad with various words scribbled onto them. The handwriting looks rather clean.
"Are you sure Mal?" Indo starts questioning Malaysia. Mal nods, interrupting Indo as he opens his mouth to talk.
"I heard him mumbling to that woman. It was clearly him. *Her* voice is definitely, 100%, never in any world that deep."
"No way."
"Indo, sorry. I love you, but why the hell would I make that up? What benefit would it have?"

"..." Indo doesn't respond.
"And what were they mumbling about if I may ask?"
"Uh- actually- I didn't quite understand them, they were too quiet." Mal awkwardly explained, rubbing the back of his neck. Indonesia looks with an incredible accurate *you-cannot-be-fucking-serious-expression*, which is hilarious, yet the wrong thing I should be amused about right now.

Malays statement is followed with silence, especially Indos brains seems to be working on immense speed.
"And what does that exactly mean in conclusion now, exactly...?" Indo asks, looking at me for some reason. I have been thinking about that in the short period of silence. Malay is spitting facts, why is he looking at me now? Oh well, perhaps I really should say something for once in this.
"Well, it does mean he's- no both of them are hiding something from us. It must be really important if they make such a big deal of something simple like voice. Either they really don't trust us with anything or- "
"No, that cannot be the case. At least 'he' has trust to us on a certain level I believe."
"Or they're doing it very intentionally, like in the other way." I slowly finish after Indo has nullified my first statement, trying to think of an answer myself, my mind going through different options. But why would they hide intentionally something from us? It doesn't add up. What makes us so distrusting? Nothing in my logical reasoning of this case adds up! What a waste of time to break my brain about. But now It won't let go of me.
Mal stretches and said something I expected to hear from him.
"Let's find it out then! They won't be able to keep this secret forever!" He says- almost yelling- being really energetic- like always. Indo tilts his head, probably thinking, then he nods. He himself must be especially curious what all this is about, especially since has taking interest in the unidentified man. Now both look at me. I mean, of course I want to know what they're hiding, yet at the same time my own moral code wants to respect their privacy.
"They surely have a valid reason to hide it... Do you really think it's a good idea?" I ask skeptically.
"Duh, they live under your roof after all. Come on! Please!" Malay tries to convince me, even making puppy eyes. I sigh and look

away, yet on that I give up, exhaling annoyed.
"Fine- but we aren't forcing anyone to give us any answer, ok? They'll just might close up again and then we get Nothing out of this. So, no irrational action." I clarify and both nod.

"And how are we doing that whole 'find out thing'?" Indo now throws the question in the round after I just said that. Good question. My 'conditions' make it a little more difficult. Malay speaks first, long before I have my thoughts sorted
"Theories, connecting the dots, you know! And then, we hit them with it that they can' talk their way out of it anymore and HAVE TO admit to everything!" Mal says, trying to sound professional- but he really doesn't. I simple cannot help myself and giggle at him. Mal turns to me, puffing up his cheeks.
"Before you laugh, you better bring something to the table as well that can help us." he demands, but it's just too funny. He's a real comedian. No wonders a bunch of people on the internet think he's funny. He is hilarious sometimes. I roll my eyes at him, still smiling.
"We need to get information of course, so we can even start to 'connect the dots'." I start expanding his plan, making quotations in the air while talking- actually sounding like a professional. At least more than our dear Malay here. Nice. I believe that I can confidentially say I've read enough thrillers and detective-stories to know how this stuff works. And I seem to have a good start at it, because Indo and Mal are looking at me, waiting for me to continue. Now I have their attention. I clear my throat, my wandering up my neck into my hair.

"You know- if they really are staying here for a longer period of time we can ask them things during conversations, uhm, the questions shouldn't be so direct though. Not like *'hey- can I know why the dude isn't mute?'*- I don't think that's the best way to go. As I already pointed out; they would get even more suspicious and then we'd have no chance getting any information. Understood?" I clarify again, just to be sure. Both my friends are quite hot headed. Indo nods, Malay narrows his eyes.
"I think I get what you say, it sounds boring thought. I believe there isn't much else though."
"Mhm, and don't you dare talk about it with the public, or they'll get all the military they need to drag both of them out of here

without us gaining any new knowledge!" I say, very strictly and Malay folds beneath my eyes.
"Okay, Okay. No worries."
"GOOD"
"And for what kind of clues are we looking for?" Indo shoves himself back in the conversation, guiding my attention away from Malay. An interesting question, actually.
"For anything! From personal stuff to relationships to past things and stories they could tell." I answer, thinking of all that could help with figuring anything out about the two. On that Indo sits straight up, his eyes shining excited.
"Oh! I already have some '*Information*' then!" he says, sounding a bit excited. His hand extents to the pad and he organizes the papers on it really quick, brushing with his eyes over the content. My eyes widen and Mal turns to him in surprise. I saw the pad before and already assumed they were communicating, yet there is value now in these notes? Indonesia keeps surprising me in all possible ways.
"You do?" Mal and me ask at the same time. Indo nods, now smiling smugly, as now he truly can contribute to this talk.
"Don't- Don't just grin and shut up, tell us!" Malay orders while I finally let go of the door and walk over to him as well. I want to see it in close up too.
"Well, you saw that we 'talked' before. He wrote that, uh, he and her are 'well acquainted'. Honestly that is very vague now that I reread it. But oh, his hand writing is so well." Indo starts to tell, his eyes flashing over the paper, already day dreaming again. This is not the time, Indo. For the worst, both of them could be serial killers or have committed war crimes. But their choice to stay is, well, good for Indo, he still has his chance, even though they are lying to us. I naturally start to grin at the notes, I can't help but feel silly as Indo has such drama. Almost a soap opera. Malaysia looks a bit confused between me and him, trying to figure out what we know that he doesn't. Time to break the ice.
"Oh yeah, by the way Malay, our dear Indonesia her has a romantic interest on the tall and sexy man that is currently staying here-"
"PHIL!" Indo growled, turning red again in an instant. Mal had a surprised expression on his face, but only for about a second before he burst out into laugher. Indo groans in being annoyed. Mal and me keep chuckling. I inhale and exhale. What a good, silly laugh.

"Anything else?" I ask as Indo regains composure.
"Oh yeah- both apparently don't know how old they are. They are over 21 at least, but then they lost count." Uhm, wow. Okay. Why? I uh, no, not gonna question this-
"Al... right-" Mal says, also confused- switching a very defined look at me. Indo simply shrugs.
"They got to be old though, he claimed that they have met a few decades ago."
"**DECADES?!**" Malay seems bewildered and I too raise an eyebrow. 'A few decades' ?! They barely look older than 25. Hell, even we don't look older than 30.
"Impossible, how do they look so young?!"
"Magic, I guess." Indonesia shrugs. He cannot be serious, really. Indo sees my glare and his expression hardens.
"Philippines, I never was more serious about anything in my entire life." Indo says blankly. Mal starts laughing, I simply stare back with 'bruh' on my face.
"Oh my lord- I can't wait for you two to get together." he wheezes. I refuse to believe the first thing, but a part of me is telling me that Indo wouldn't lie. Not if 'heard' it from his love interest. Hm.
Like that, Indo finishes his 'report'. Something inside of me tell me that this could be very important. But eh- I'm sure it's nothing. I sigh heavily again; I have idiots surrounding me on a consistent basis. Then I look at the time. It got really late... time flies by, man.

"Alright bois. Enough of that, let's make dinner!" I clap my hands and stop leaning against the door, unlocking it. I am starving. They nod, and we leave the room, walking down the stairs to the kitchen. As we've decided on what to make for this evening, we start preparing the food. We make dinner in complete silence. I'm sure everyone is thinking about what has been said and agreed on, especially Indo. I mean, this is an eventful day... The ma found his companion, we found out that he apparently isn't mute, Neth is officially dead
Netherlands, eh?
My mind wanders to the guy. I didn't really like him. Wow, now I have to make sure that I always refer to him in the past tense. In his 'youth' he was quite arrogant, but before he left he changed, I guess. I never seen him much, I don't hang out with the Europeans. Yet now, there will be much debate in town for sure, news spread like

wild fire, after all. But I feel like I should not keep shitting on him, but rather respect his death. I must be hard for the family, even after all those years. For us countries, 70 years isn't really that long.

Well damn. Now I want to know more about this fella. Now that it is too late. I throw a side eye to Indo. No, I better not bother him with the Dutch, he'll just start to yell, as always. He is quite sensitive. He can be angry, horrible things happened to all of us here, yet I think times have changed a little and he should calm down. Maybe I'll ask her about the Dutch... she said that she knew him pretty well. At least that is what I have been told. Maybe it helps my oh so hungry curiosity. While I cut vegetables my brain asks me an important question and it also starts theorizing.
*What a coincident that that Netherlands went missing **70** years ago, and both our guest said that they met the dude **a few decades** years ago, right? 70 years are a few decades. what if that connects? Actually, looking at the man:*
-He tries to keep his identity hidden
-He is quite tall
-His skin is a dark blue, definitely not like a human

I stop cutting, lowering my shoulders with the developing thought. That's an interesting thought indeed.
It could explain why he doesn't want to talk; he fears that we recognize his voice.
That's why he seems to know all here and doesn't ask questions; he's been here before.
It explains why he is hesitant; his personality shifted before he left.
It explains the PTSD; he's got it from the wars... and from the emotional mistreatment of us afterwards.

.
.
Holy shit... no way. There is no way. How did no one else notice yet?

It'd explain why *his... Neth's* female friend told us he's dead; to keep the secret. It's a cover up! That we don't assume it could be him. He still fears what we'll do to him if it is revealed. Suddenly, my stomach has turned and I simply hold onto the counter.
"Uhm... Phil? Are you alright? You are really pale all the sudden." I

hear Malay talking to me, yet it sounds far away and I barely register it.
"Phil?" Indo asks now too, but I am still processing the new found info. The Netherlands... is in my home! The former predator, causing so much suffering! I... no way.

"Philippines Manila!"

I gasp that the knife drops from my hand onto the cutting board. I look at my friends, who's eyes are widened.
"Are you okay?!"
"What's the matter?"
"I... I..." I stammer. Now the two seem really worried. I gather myself before talking.
"I need to lay down, I'm not so well."
"O-Oh...?"
"Alright... get some rest, I'll make you some tea." They say and I walk to the couch, laying down. I feel like throwing up. Netherlands... Netherlands Amsterdam is in my home, for like a week, and I have not noticed... How didn't Indo notice yet? Has the love and also rage made him blind? Oh, if he finds out, this will be a field trip.

A million thoughts run through my head and I barely notice Malay bringing me a cup of tea. As soon as he is gone, I make a final resolve.

Ihave to talk to Netherlands.

Extra Chapter

Extra Chapter

I open my window, letting the semi warm air and the cool wind inside my dark room. I haven't done anything today except staying in bed. This has been going on for half a week now. I sit on my bed, mindlessly staring out the window, cupping my cheek with my hand. Dad just slapped me... again. I thought I'd be able to get him to calm down, but Dutch Republic is a terrible person. Now he's just bullying me, his son, even though I just did everything he asked for the past centuries, even if I couldn't stand doing it. What a way to thank me... I barely have friends because of it, and almost everyone dislikes me. Maybe I shouldn't have thrown my life away for him. I sigh, running my hand down my face. It's really hard living like this. Yet, I believe it's just Karma. I made others suffer, and now I am the one suffering. I don't even want to go out on the streets anymore.

I keep looking out the window. It's a rather stormy evening and 6pm already. After an uncertain amount of time, the door knocks. I figure that it's not from my family, as my siblings open right after knocking and Dad doesn't even knock at all.
"Ja?" I lazily sigh with just enough strength that the other person could hear me. The door carefully opens and the closes, and only then I turn my head to see who it is. I get surprised to see my German friend at the entrance of my room.
"Hello Nether."
"Ah... Germs. Hey."
"I wanted to check up on you."
"At 6 in the evening? What would your family think?"
"I'm a grown man, Neth."
"I guess so, sit down." I invite him and he proceeds to sit down next to me. Then, we both stare out the window. Germs isn't really doing anything, but his presence helps. At least someone who isn't hating on me. The man cleans his glasses and then turns his head to me while I simple watch from the corners of my eyes.

"Netherlands, you've really gotten worse! You're all pale an- did- d-did he hit you again?!" *he started preaching me, stopping when he saw the unusual red spot on my cheek. I advert my eyes and sigh.*
"Obliviously."
"I keep saying it, we've got to tell someone! That's abuse!"
"Who will even want to help me at this point?"
"Wel- "
"No one. It's karma for my past. I deserve it."
"Don't say that! Every country has done some messed up Scheiße, you don't need to think you've deserved it! And your country is even doing things to strengthen a friendly relationship with the Indonesians!"
"That is true for our lands, yes, but we remain isolated from that. And you carry your 'German-guilt' with you, right?" I say motionless, and my friend gets quiet, seemingly going through a dictionary in his head to find right words. He does that often; he thinks everything through before speaking. I respect that, a lot.
"Of course I do, it will be part of my life forever, yet I try to life with it without it tearing me down too much. That's not the goal of life in my opinion."
"It's not like I haven't been trying, Germs!"
"I know..."
"I don't understand how they keep blaming me, you said that everyone has done stupid stuff."
"It's rather flabbergasting to witness, yes." *the German hums. I feel like he is the only person I can really rely on, right after Luxembourg. My friend stands up and walks around the room a little, his brain is working.*

"Uhm. Would you like to do something so it was worth the visit?" I ask before he starts unwinding all sorts of conspiracies. Germany stops in his motions, curious.
"Like what?"
"Painting?" I question. Painting calms me, it's a favorite hobby of mine. And Germany likes to paint too.
"I mean sure, if you don't mind." *he responds and I can feel the excitement radiating from him. Germany is such a sweet person, no wonders he is slowly getting more popular again himself, but would he really still hang out with a looser like me then? Is this friendship just temporary? I mean we've been friends for forever, but I've seen what*

fame does to a person...
"Are you going to keep your head in the clouds or are you going to help me set this up now?" Germany tears me out of my thoughts, half way done already.
"Ah, right! Sorry!" I yelp and get going. Germs chuckles drily and soon we sit next to each other, drawing. We keep going and my head is empty as I draw, not really paying attention to anything, not even the process.
"What are you drawing? It looks... interesting.*" again, Germany is the one dragging my soul back into my body. I blink at him and first take a brief look at his picture. He drew a skull on dark background that is burning in light flames. It's really good for the short amount of time that he stayed. My eyes wander to my own canvas and I get startled a little. Strokes in various colors are randomly drawn, the colors merging to a sort of dark mess, yet the silhouette of a person at a window is still distinguishable. It's pure chaos, yet calm, somehow.*
"...My emotions." I simply whisper, still looking at it.
"Woahh."
"..."
"I like it. UHM- I MEAN- I like the picture, the motive behind it is a little concerning. Perhaps you should go and see Schweiz."
"Switzerland?"
" He is a psychotherapist after all."
"Maybe... I don't have the money for it though."
"Right... Dutch wouldn't pay."
"Never."
"I'll have a talk with him, regardless."
"With Dad?"
"With Switzerland."
"Ah, of course."

After painting we put everything away in its place, letting the canvases dry in peace. Despite the clouds and wind, the sky is various reds and oranges. We sit on my bed again, like before, simply glaring out the window, right now the only light source in my room. I can feel that Germany is thinking again.

"I feel like there are multiple factors behind it, really." *he suddenly restarts the conversation from before we painted. For some reason my remember remembers it perfectly, I have no problem picking is up seamlessly from where we left off.*

"Aha?" I watch him walking, waiting for him to continue.
"You have been one of the most impactful nations in the far past with rather impressing oversea territory."
"Keep going."
"You see how popular Indonesia is in our community. Everyone loves him. I wonder how he does it."
"..."
"Perhaps another reason is that you've been randomly selected to be the scapegoat of everyone's crimes. It seems likely. No one except a few want to really take responsibility. Countryhumans are known for their tremendous ego, after all." *Germs concludes and it sadly enough is quite convincing. I groan and hang my head low.*
"Shiet."
"Mhm."

"And there isn't anything we can do?"
"I can't think of anything. You've already changed so much in the past decade. At first, I couldn't really recognize you."
"So there is no light at the end of the tunnel..." I sigh and Germany sits down next to me again. I feel his arm wandering over my back in attempt to comfort me. I exhale and hug him. He definitely didn't see that coming, but the German keeps calm and embraces our bro-hug.

"I feel like you are the only reasonable person in this entire city." I sigh. Germs doesn't answer, but lets me silently know that he'll be there for me, which is really comforting. I'm not alone.
"Surely, some day they'll realize how childish they behave." *he mumbles. Suddenly, he hugs me tighter.*
"I'm so sorry! I wish I could speak out! But if I say anything they don't agree with they call me Nazi!" *he says.*
"I'm a bad friend, I should support you more, despite that. You shouldn't be suffering like this!" *he continues. I don't answer and hear him to start sobbing. It seems to bother him so much. I remain a little flabbergasted at the affection, until I feel like crying myself. I hug him tightly as well, tears running down my face.*

"No... No. You're not a bad friend."
"B-But- "
"You're the most amazing friend I could have ever asked for!"
"..."

"Who else is helping me through all of this?"
"..."
"Germs, please." *I pull us apart and make him look at me. His eyes are big and glossy and blood shot, his breath hitching in uneven intervals.*
"Don't blame yourself, please."
"A-Ach... Neth."
"Here, have tissue." I hand him one from my night stand and he hastily wipes his tears, regaining composure in seconds. Quite impressive. He then reaches for my night stand and proceeds to hand ME a tissue.
"Now you." *he is quite serious about it. I can't help myself and crack a small smile.*
"Thanks, Germs."
"No problem."

10| A threat

Philippines's POV

As soon as Malay had left, I get up, feeling the weight of the situation in my stomach, like a boulder. I make my way up the stairs to the guest room. They are in there. I stand frozen in front of the door, hesitant to make a move, my heart pounding in my chest. I take a deep breath... and knock. Soon after, the door opens, and the woman stands there.
"**What?**" she says, kind of unfriendly. She musters me with a rather confused look, surely it is my face.
"**You look like you've seen a ghost, man.**" she scoffs and I finally snap out of the trance.
"Is you friend here?"
"**Where else should he be?**"
"Relax. Uhm, may I come inside?"
"**No.**" she slams the door in my face, leaving me stunned for a moment. Excuse you?! This is MY house, not yours. As I was about to knock again, shuffling inside the room was heard, and none other than who I believe to be Netherlands himself. Now that I know this, the former 'gentle giant' is suddenly much more threatening than before. I feel so small next to him. The hidden Country tilts his head in question at me and I muster up the courage to speak.
"Can I... talk with you inside the room? It is important. Very important." I speak slowly and quietly, and his expressions falls, nodding. Going inside the guest room, an annoyed woman stares at me as she sits on the bed. Netherlands sits next to her and I close the door.
"**So? What is it?**" she asks and I gulp heavily.

"I have discovered that you two have lied in a very big way."
"**So what?**"
"I know who our cloaked-up friend is. It's you, Netherlands, isn't it?" I break the ice.
"**What kind of accusation is that? We've seen him die.**"

"It's the only way his motives make sense." I eye the man. His friend scoffs in a big manner.
"You sound crazy, you know that, right?" she even points her finger at me and I do crumble under the pressure a little. Right, these could be bad accusations.
"Besides, why the hell WOULD Neth ever want to come back here? In case he was alive?"
"Perhaps he'd want to take vengeance." I think loudly. The woman's lip curl, as if she tries to suppress a grin.
"Vengeance, eh?"
"Don't laugh at me!"
"I'm not."
"Hmpf." I scoff back, crossing my arms on my chest as I eye both of them carefully.

"Then it shouldn't be a problem for him to take his hood of to prove he isn't Netherlands, right?"
"Are you fucking serious?"
"Yes, I've lived long enough with an unidentified person. This is MY house, after all.
"Don't be so petty about something like this."
"I'm kicking you out if you keep insulting me."
"What are you, an idiot?!" I feel awkward and in danger with the woman's hateful aura around, but I follow through with my point.
"You two tried to cover it all up, but your stories gave the truth away. Now take that hood of, Neth!" I demand, pointing my finger at him. His friend seems angry and is about to say something, but Nether stops her.

"... Let it go." he sighs and pulls the hood off. My heart beat stopped for a moment and I feel all kinds of different emotions. It's him... really him. He's avoiding eye contact, and God, his face is ugly. No offense, but how did that happen?! Now my jaw dropped. I had the realization before, but now he is real and right in front of me.
"Netherlands..." I manage to whisper.
"I already wondered when someone would find out. I figured you are the most attentive in this house." he exhales and I stumble over my words.
"S-So it really is you!" I stutter, my throat closing.
"W-What happened to you?!"
"You wouldn't be interested. Bet it was better without me..." he mumbles

and I don't answer immediately.
"I'm... sorry, I am just shocked." I awkwardly chuckle as his friend gives me death glares. She then speaks up. Oh god, an intimidating aura is radiating from her. Quite scary.
"Alright, fine. You got us. So now you know. What will you do now?!"
"I- " before I'm able to say anything, she suddenly steps close, grabbing me by my collar. She shoves me into the wall without any sort of difficulty. I gas in surprise, not having expected a small woman like her to be this strong. She even lifts me above ground with one arm. In a fit of panic, I kick with my feet and put my hand on her hand around my neck, gasping for air. In my terrified state I stare with widen eyes at her façade. Her red eyes burn brightly into my soul. And the one with the scar too, yet the eye white is black. T-That isn't human?! What- What is this person?! This thing?!
"Because if you do or try anything stupid, I will cut your throat open!" she slowly hisses, tightening the grab around my neck, giving me barely room to breathe. I whimper a bit, utterly terrified. So, I HAVE two serial killers in my home! What were the odds?! Suddenly, Netherlands intervenes and tears the woman away from me, even catching me on my way falling to the ground.
"Phil, are you okay?!" he sounds frantic, and I take deep breaths. He... helped me?! Really? I cough a little.
"I'm o-okay, thanks." I cannot believe I just thanked *him*. Nether turns to his friend with a mean glare.
"You could have NOT done that!"
"Are you kidding me?! I'm trying to safe your ass! If he tells anyone we're done fore and have to leave! I thought you didn't want that!" she argues and Neth remains silent. I remain quiet too, still in Neth's safety. Heh, that is so weird to think. As both argue I look up to his now free face. His features are soft and show none of the permanent aggression from before, even though parts of his skin are permanently burned off. This man... got a lot of wounds connected to fire. Even now, he speaks with a calm yet determined voice instant of strict and straight yelling. He really has changed. A lot.

Perhaps... I ought to give him a chance. No, could I? I need to find out more first.

I tuck a little awkward at Neth's scarf. His attention immediately turns to me.
"Uhm, could you... let me go?"
"Ah! Of course, I'm so sorry!" he says and lets go. I straighten up and simply ignore the angry *not*-human on the other side of the room.
"Neth, I. I uhm, would be really interested to talk with you!" I stammer in hopes of not being stabbed and Neth's orange eyes light up.
"Wait, you don't hate me?"
"'Hate'... is a strong word(?). I am not sure how to feel about any of this right now." I carefully answer.
"I understand what you mean." He replies. An annoyed scoff is heard and we turn to the noise.
"So I guess I'm not needed here and you want me gone. I'm not happy."
"You don't feel, just go."
"Well, sure then! Neth, you'll at least tell me when there is food alright?" she rolls her eyes.
"Sure." the Dutch answers and then the woman straight up TELEPORTS out the room. I stand there, flabbergasted.
"WHAT?! WHAT WAS THAT?! WHAT IS SHE?!"
"Will you believe me that, uhm, she is an interdimensional being of the void?"
"A what?"
"Uhm, I've been on 'travels' during the past decades."
"You cannot tell you have... switched dimensions???"
"Basically, yes."
"HOW?!"
"Long story."

My and Neth sit on the bed as he tries to explain to me how he got here.
"...and then, I made a deal with her." he says. I sit next to him, staring at the thought to be dead man, listening to this insane kind of tale.
"Like, making a deal with the devil?"
"Exactly. With all kinds of ritual stuff. I even was the sacrifice."
"H-Huh?!"
"That scar. I traded my life for this bond."
"But... why?"
"You should know. I hated it here. Due to the given laws, there was no

way out. I couldn't even die if I wanted to since I am still a Countryhuman. I'd have given anything to make it stop." He just rambles the words off his soul, no life behind his eyes. A sudden realization shoots in my brain.
"So, because you weren't really dead, a new Netherlands – Countryhuman wasn't created in your place!"
"Exactly. Also, why Luxembourg was still looking... I am so sad for him." His voice is quiet and I think about his family for a while.
"Are you... a Zombie then?"
"No, I ain't rotting."
"Ah... right. And then you left with her?"
"Mhm. Very long 70 years."
"...Indeed."

"Uhm..." I get a little embarrassed.
"Sorry to be poking into you like this."
"Wait, you're sorry?"
"Y-Yes?" I answer, eyeing him unsurely. Nether remains quiet.
"I'm just not used to it, sorry."
"No, no, I'm sorry! You seem... nicer now." I fumble over my words awkwardly and the Dutch lets out a dry laugh at my responds. I relax my shoulders a little.
"Can I ask what made your personality change this much?"
"Actually, I don't know."
"What?"
"One day I just... didn't feel angry anymore, just calm. But sometimes the anger comes back and speaks to me, and then I kind of black out for a moment. It never ends well..." he sighs and I believe his words, they sound 100% genuine.
"You should see a psychotherapist about this." I say.
"Phil, I cannot see Switzerland right now because of oblivious reasons."
"Switzerland?"
"He... still is a psychotherapist, right?"
"Oh! Yes, he still is." I confirm.
"So, you black out when you get angry?"
"It is very hard to describe, I feel like I am not me anymore. And when I wake up everything is gone. Burned."
"Burned?"
"Yes."
"Well, I really am not qualified for any of this, but either you have a

really bad anger problem or perhaps undiagnosed DID."
"I don't know, but it always scares me. E-Especially when I was h-here the first time a-and Indo scared m-me- " he stammers, starting to tremble. My eyes widen.
"You mean when you had your mental breakdown and I took you to the bathroom, you almost switched?!"
"Yeah!"

I inhale deeply, now just realizing how deep this crisis actually is.
"Neth, the others need to know who you are!"
"NO!" he gets loud, regrets it and gathers himself.
"They can't, I don't want to back to before! Please Phil!" he begs, great sadness and fear laying in his eyes. I hesitate. I have so many more questions. Why did he return, or why were he and her separated when he can't travel without her? Or can he? Where do the burn marks come from and what does he think of the others? Especially... Indonesia. I calm myself down first.
"Okay, I won't say anything for now bu-"
"Ah! Thank you so much, Phil!"
"But I have so many other questions!"
"Right..."
"Yet, I think I'll give you room to breathe. Can I have one more question though?"
"Uhm, what is it?"

"What do you think of Indo? He uh... has a 'crush' on the 'unidentified'-you." I cough, avoiding eye contact. Now I've made it incredibly awkward. Netherlands lowers his head.
"I've notice. I'm so afraid."
"Yeah, uh, especially how he thinks and talks about you and past you."
"He can never find out. I don't think I can live through it again."
"He is quite stubborn."
"He has every right to still be mad at me."
"After so many years?"
"Mhm."
"Nether, I know you're different, but Indo has to grow up and handle this like an adult, and not throw tantrum whenever someone mentions your name."
"..."

"I'll talk with some others to get reason into him, perhaps. Not because of you, but because I'm tired of it in general. He has to stop behaving like a child."
"I'll... leave it to you, then."

"Good. What do you think about him personally?" I keep asking out of curiosity. The room remains silent. Silent for too long. I look at him again, surprised that his cheeks have redden. Neth notices me afterwards too, and gets flabbergasted.
"Well- uh- he is Indonesia!"
"Go on?"
"It's not like I hate him." He sighs.
"I'd like to be friends, but it's just not possible. He always tries to get close to me and I get flustered, but I know it won't work out."
"Checks out, I guess."

I exhale deeply and fall on the bed.
"Man, I never thought I'd be so stressed in my live again."
"Sorry."
"No, it's intriguing. I believe you when you say you've bettered yourself, and I can see how a slightly split personality explains your hyperacute acting. I'll see what I can do for now.
"Thank you, Philippines. Truly, from the bottom of my heart. Thank you for the chance."

"It'salright."
We continue silent, processing. Eventually I hear Malay yelling fromdownstairs.
"Oh, dinner is ready." I say, looking to the door. Nether puts his hood on,hiding his face again. Now that I know, his disguise is really flawed.
"How I did not notice it was you immediately? Is there any 'camouflage'-spell?"
"Sure."
"Ah, okay. I suppose I shouldn't be surprised at this point anymore."
"Mhm. Let's go eat. I'll call my 'interdimensional' friend really quick."
"Alright!"

11|Tricky Situation

Philippines's POV

So, my and Netherlands go down the stairs, my heart still pounding heavily. I believe him that he has changed, but the thought itself is so... weird? Unusual? It's hard to put it into words what I'm feeling right now. I soon reach the living space down stairs and Malay greets me.
"Ah! Phil! There you are! I got worried!"
"Oh, sorry. I'm feeling way better now!"
"I see, I see. Did you go to the bathroom?"
"Uh, yes, sure."
"Alright! Me and Indo finished, let's go eat."
"Finally, I was starving." suddenly, a female voice straps in. I rapidly turn my head around and see the inhuman woman at the top of the stairs. So, Neth did call her somehow. I guess it's possible because of their pact? It's still so insane to me...
But no one is asking for my opinion.
Malaysia pulls me to the side as the cloaked and hidden Netherlands as well as the woman already walk into the kitchen. Right, they don't know it's him... and I agreed on keeping it a secret.
"So we're doing it now?"
"D...Doing what?"
"You know, the asking." Malay whispers. And oh god, he is excited for it. I already feel the boulder in my stomach gaining weight. I'm like a double agent now, oh no.
"Uh, I don't know."
"Huh? Why are you so reluctant all the sudden?"
"Uhm... uh- " I think desperately.
"I think they are onto us already."
"How so?"
"Uhm, just a feeling."
"Are you sure you are feeling okay? You behave all nervous."
"Yes! I am okay!" I say and walk to the kitchen in a fast pace. I am so bad with secrets; people always can tell whenever I'm lying. And

now I have basically the weight of 'my world' on my shoulders.

Like that, I completely ignore Malay and I sit down at the table, almost collapsing on the chair. Alright, I admit, 'collapsing' is a strong word, but I exhale really loudly. Indo watches me and the other two already sit at the table too. Nether listens quietly and the woman gives me a warning glare, which does not help my situation. AT ALL. RELAX, GIRL.
"Are you feeling better?"
"Yes. Well, good enough to eat and not vomit anything afterwards including stomach juices." I state and Indos face falters.
"You... didn't have to be so specific."
"Okay." I sigh and hear Malay coming in. He throws me a questioning glare and then, he sits down as Indo helps filling the plates.

The evening passes and luckily neither Malay nor Indo were asking any questions, trusting my judgement. Like that, I was able to relax a bit. Phew, barely dodged a bullet there! As I clean the plates with Netherlands, he suddenly remains a whole lot closer to me, I see Indo watching us from the corner of my eye. I wonder if he is jealous? I so comedic to think that Indonesia has romantic interest in the person he hates most. But oh well, I have no idea how this could work out. I nudge Neth in the side and whisper in his ear.
"Indo seems jealous. I know you're afraid but perhaps you should spend some time with him." I say, hoping that this will fix my problem. Neth looks up and over his shoulder to Indo, who gets startled. I see Nether putting on a smile and waving to the other man. Indo gets a little flustered and waves back. Then Neth walks to Indo and both leave the room. I breath heavily in and out.
"You better get some rest early; I can clean the dishes." Malay, still finishing a can of beer, offers. That is kind of him, yet...
"But you're streaming in 5 minutes."
"No one will be mad if I'm late. You're more important than my fans."
"Pff, are you even listening how cheesy you sound?" I laugh drying, mocking him with my tone.
"Philip, I've learned to embrace any cringe."
"Stop, no one ever calls me 'Philip'."
"Why? Are you *cringing* right now?" he grins and I roll my eyes.

"Fair enough, you got me." I shake my head. Malay keeps laughing. "But seriously, go to bed. Maybe see Austria tomorrow if it isn't better."
"Sure, 'Dad'."
"Oh, I can be your daddy, Philip."
"WHAT."
"I'M KIDDING LOL XD"
"YOU- you idiot."
"I'm sorry." he is still giggling, but it sounds genuine.
"Next time I'm not forgiving you, now do the dishes!"
"Sure. Get the rest."
"Yeah, yeah. Don't you dare tell anyone."
"Hm?"
"It's embarrassing, okay? Especially since we are 'Bros'." I sigh. We aren't related by blood, but I think of Malay and Indo as brothers, NOT more, or whatever Malay was trying to imply. Or not. Sometimes I cannot tell what is a joke and what isn't with this man.
"You're right. I apologize deeply for what the internet did to my brain. I didn't mean to make you uncomfortable." Mal sighs in a more serious matter. I mumble a responds and head upstairs to my room, knowing I'd barely get any sleep tonight.

The next morning, I don't get out of bed before 9:30. As I figured last night, I was barely sleeping, my brain overheating while processing. What a day yesterday. So much happened. This woman was suddenly here, Neth was allegedly dead but isn't, really, he has just returned with his PTSD from here and that after 70 years of being outside this universe doing SOMETHING, and now the inhuman threatened to me to kill everyone if Netherland's identity comes to light and everything becomes like in the past. Oh. Dear. Lord.
What chaos.
Is there even hope of us?
Technically, if others stop behaving like asshole and see the changes, or something. Except for Indo's tantrums, I don't really remember how I started hating him.
Urgh, it's not even Lunch and my head hurts, but I can't just stay inside my bed a day. With the intention of getting some pain killers I lazily get up, dress and move down stairs where everything is quite busy.

In a bad way. Indo is yelling quite angrily.

"Do you even KNOW who you're talking about?!"
"Certainly, I do. But do YOU know anything, actually, you dumb ass sheet?!" a female voice responds. Oh no. Not even a day can go by without any fighting. I bet they're arguing about him, since she has a history with him and Indo's fuse with Neth as topic is basically none existent.

"Did you even think about what he has done in the past?!" Indo says, sounding quite angry.
"Yeah! And seeing your bullshit 'till today, he should've ended you while he could, you infant!" she hisses back and the temperature in the room rises about 15 degrees. Malay stands with Netherlands in a corner, eyeing their fight, both not nearly close enough to the entrance of the room to vanish into thin air without at least one of them noticing. Malay is sweating bullets as he is uncomfortable, his face literally saying 'We have discussed this so often now, how is this still happening?' while Neth is scared. I pray that he wouldn't break again or even worse, switch.
I hate this so much

"Uh- guys." I clear my throat in hopes of breaking them up, but no one listens.
"Well in my opinion I don't think you have the SLIGHTEST idea why I hate him this much! YOU step in here, coming out of nowhere, pretending to know everything and everyone perfectly- but that is NOT TRUE YOU LIAR!" Indo almost yells- slamming a fist on the table. The woman remains silent for a moment, glaring intensely at Indo.
"You're just insulting me because you don't want to reason like an adult."
"I am an adult."
"You throw tantrums like a kid. Against someone dead. Do you know how unrespectful that is?"
"Do I look like I care about respecting him?!" Indo scoffs and I mentally facepalm.
"Indo... please." I mumble. There is just, too much discussion. I don't want to hear it anymore. It's all about Netherlands and Netherlands only. Almost annoying. I don't think the man himself carries much

fault in this though. I throw a glare over to him. It's us who stretch the topic so much... especially Indo. I wonder how long this keeps going. Hopefully not to long.
Indonesia continues his rambling.
"He hurt. MANY. PEOPLE, including ME! HE COLONIZED, MURDERED, EXPLOIDED and RAPED US FOR HIS OWN FORFILLMENT! To be honest- I glad he's dead. He deserves it. At his fullest."
"You don't have to forgive him, just be a little more respectful, damnit!"
And then, I slam the door shut. Loudly. I've had enough.
"Hello. Good morning." I say loudly, putting much force on my words. And it actually works as the room gets very quiet.
"I assume I haven't disturbed anything? Good, then we can eat breakfast now."

Soon we eat in silence. Well, everyone is busy eating, so. Personally, I feel very awkward now, after what has happened. The atmosphere is tense around us three, Malay and Indo seem still compliant on the plan and I have no way to back out anymore without revealing that I know anything, even though I know what is going on. A terrible state to be in. Netherlands seems quite nervous as well. Does he think I'll just throw him under the bus? I have information to blackmail him, after all. He is still scared from the past and has very little confidence in me, but he doesn't have another choice. Only his friend seems to be completely calm. Oh... she knows that nothing of this will affect her. And she can kill and will kill if I do the wrong thing. I get goose bumps just by thinking about it. Usually, Countryhumans don't just die, but right now I'm not so sure about it. She is not from this world, afterwards and possesses otherworldly powers.
She doesn't seem to be stupid either, so that is making me quite uneasy. I put my knife down and push the plate further on the table, pushing myself away from the table a bit. I did eat, but I've lost my appetite about now. I deeply inhaled. After another moment of intenseness, I watch how Malay lifts his head from the plate too. He looks at me, and then to her. He keeps switching looks between us. I understand immediately what he is about to do and desperately try to signal him to do otherwise. I shake my head barely noticeable, and he nods barely noticeably. I throw a both

concerned and waring glare, but it is no use.
"Hey- uh- **you**? Can I ask you something?" Malay says, hesitating visibly, yet confident. She looks up from her food, scanning over him for the blank of a second. She looks over to me for a moment, causing me to mentally freak out.

MALAY.
NO.
MALAYSIA, *PLEASE.*
DON'T DO THIS.
YOU'VE JUST SEEN WHAT HAPPENED!
THIS IS DANGROUS.
MALAY!
NO!

"I hope that it's finally worth my time. What is it?" she grumbles, taking another bite out of the slice of bread she was eating. She prefers bread over rice but she has some on her plate too. Not sure if she wants to seem polite, because she hasn't really been polite the entire time. She is more of a bitch.
"I was wondering about you and your friend, where are you from?" he questions, and I'm not sure if I should be relieved or not. The woman simply chews her food for a moment, yet I see Indo perking up too, interested. Now all eyes lay on the inhuman.

NOOOOOOOO-
"You may not wonder. It's not important where we are from."
"But this area is off limits and heavily guarded. No one from the outside never made it in." he proceeds to think loudly. She stops chewing and her glare hardens.
"Are you sure?"
"Definitely."
"Well, you're wrong then. We made it in. It's good that you haven't called security on us yet or something, because then," she says and at then her speech turns into mumbles that isn't understandable. I think my part in horror.
"Then what?"
"Nothing. You'll see when the time comes."
"Which is hopefully never." I break the conversation up before anything else happens. Right. Indo and Malay don't know that both

'strangers' can use 'magic' (I guess) to bend our reality and physics to their will. Crazy that Netherlands can do that too now...
"Right." Indonesia mumbles and for once I am thankful for his simping.

Just as I start to relax again, Indo now too is part of the conversation, even though he and her just yelled at each other 10 minutes ago.
"Oh yea! He told me earlier that you two travels much. Can you tell some stories please?" he asks with puppy eyes. The woman seems to be taken back and looks to Neth, almost looking like she'd ask for help.
"**Humans... was zur eigentlichen hölle.**" she sighs beneath her breath and it's barely hearable.

Whatever she said, I agree.

12| Reflektion

Indonesia's POV

When the woman was down with eating, she simply stood up, leaving the table without losing a word or even a single look at anyone else. What a bitch. She knows nothing.
'Actually, I am intrigued.'
"I wasn't talking with you."
'I know.'
My Mate did the same, he got up and followed her. The given information that I know about him, it's... fair that he takes her side. Though I would have liked it more if he stayed. I realized that he was shaking while leaving the room, as if his legs were butter. Looking over to the others, Phil looks utterly tired and also stressed, staring into nothingness, is there guilt printed on his face? Malay is avoiding social interaction at all, scrolling through his phone. A very pressed atmosphere. This my fault.
'You noticed?'
"Shut up." it is all my fault we are here like this.

A wave of exhaustion rushes over me, realizing that grabbing onto the hate all the time is tiring. I don't want to deal with it anymore, I just cannot help myself.
'***"You're just insulting me because you don't want to reason like an adult."***' she had said.
"You throw tantrums like a kid. Against someone dead. Do you know how unrespectful that is?" **that, too. Allah, maybe she's right. I behave like a kid. My behavior is so disrespectful, and I know how it feels to have people dying on me. I just was... blinded with rage and hate. It really makes me someone different. Perhaps he realized that too? They've said he'd changed, after all.**
'And I keep telling you this the entire time.'
"I know, sorry."
'At least you're coming to your senses, after all the years I had to

endure this. Now we can finally start working on ourself. You're getting us anti-aggression-training. Basta!'
I sigh and break down, allowing myself a break from the strict front, my head going on the table with a 'thump'. My mind is right, she is right too. I am an idiot.
'It's hard, I know. We can do it!' I mentally chuckle at myself in irony. Suddenly so determined. I keep my eyes closed but hear as Phils and Malays heads shoot up towards me.
"Why did I do that? And why do I keep doing it? It only makes everything worse..." I mumble, at the edge of crying.
"Well-" Phil started a sentence- but I interrupted.
"I shouldn't have snapped and... readjusted my behavior long ago. It's disrespectful towards Netherlands and his family... and it hurt my relationship with her, and also the mental state of my friend here" I sob quietly. No one answered for a moment. I hear a chair being moved and then a hand on my back.

"Oh Indo..." I hear Phil sigh. He seems relieved.
"Finally, you're growing up mentally."
"I'm sorry, I- "
"Shh. No need to talk." he reassures me and Malay, from the other side, pulls me into a hug.
"Let's take this to the living room, it's comfier than this cold kitchen." he says softly, but with an urgency, that we all really move to the other room. Malay sits with me down on the couch and Phil was getting me some tissues too. They are both so kind, and patient with me. I take deep breath and look to the floor.
"I'm such an idiot."
"You're not, you just have problems coming to terms with them."
"Maybe, but I behave like a dick. I've been like this for decades now, haven't I?" I sigh into silence.
"Be honest."
"Well uhm, yes."
"It was never that bad, but whenever we wanted to point something out, you'd go on a rampage."
"Right. Sorry."
"We should talk with South Korea about it. Surely, he can teach you some of his tricks in anger management." Phil thinks loudly.
"You think that would help?"
"It wouldn't hurt, I think."

"Maybe."
"I'll call him, then."
"Okay."

Phil hands me the tissues and heads out the room to grab his phone. Me and Malay remain on the couch as my brain starts drowning itself with thought, showing me moments of the past where I know realize what an idiot I was. Embarrassing. This is so embarrassing. Malay notices my uncomfortableness and start a conversation.
"You know, I have a charity event next month."
"Huh?"
"I'm doing a charity stream."
"I understood you the first time."
"Okay. I'm still searching for fun things to do. Any ideas?" he smiles.
"What kind of charity is it?"
"It's for people that experience domestic violence."
"That is... good. A good cause to fund."
"Yeah right! It's a big thing that multiple streamers raise money for right now. Similar to #teamtrees or #teamsea, but not as big."
"That doesn't matter."
"True. So, you got any idea on what fun stuff I could do on stream?"
Malays eyes shine as he carries the conversation to distract me from my intruding thoughts. We chat for a while and come up with stuff to do, perhaps I'll spend a section on the stream as well as guest. A nice idea.
We keep chatting until Philippines reenters the room, smiling.

"I see you two are having an eager chat, I hope I don't disturb as much."
"Nah, Philip, it's all good." Mal chuckles and Phils expression flattens. 'Philip'? Who the hell calls Phil 'Philip'? The man in the door frame sighs.
"Anyways, I have contacted South Korea.
"Oh? And?"
"He said, and I quote: 'Indo is always free to come by, I really don't mind.'" Phil quotes. Malay seems rather ecstatic for some reason.
"Let's pay him a visit then!"
"Now?!"
"Of course! When else??"
"Ah..."

"I'll tell the others that we're leaving." Phil says, calmer than our brother, already vanishing in the doorway again. I sigh. This is going at a quite fast pace. Malay drags me to the front door and I watch Phil returning from upstairs.

And then I make myself a promise. My 'Mate', my friend: Next time we see each other, I'll face you as a different person, a better person.
'Wooooooooo.'
"Don't ruin my moment."

It doesn't take too long until we reach the house of North Korea and South Korea. Since when do they live together? I thought North hated South. I will surely have myself an explanation soon. Phil goes first to ring the doorbell. Meanwhile I look around the front porch. I like the zen garden esthetic they went for. Easy to take care of. I return my attention to the door. Honestly, I get a little startled as Noth Korea opens the door. His flat and rather cold eyes quickly analyze the situation. I inhale through my nose. Oh god, it's him. The bomb loving maniac.
"Ah, it's you. South told me you'd come."
"Oh, it's not all of us, just Indonesia!"
"Indonesia?"
"Exactly." Phil shoves me in the foreground as if I'm some little kid at the kindergarten. North looks at me and exhales.
"Sure. Fell welcomed to come inside, Indo." He says and I remain completely flabbergasted at his behavior. I mean, okay, I haven't talked to North in ages! What happened to him! He is so... much nicer!
"Uh- uhm- thank you." I nod and follow the man inside, looking one last time to my friends. Phil smiles and Malay gives me a thumbs up, then the door closes. I feel a little intimidated, until suddenly South Korea appears in the hallway with a wide smile.
"Ah! Hello Indo! Welcome in our home. I don't think you've been here before in this new house of ours~"
"Uhm, no I have not. It's really nice." I say, avoiding eye contact with North, who is straight up staring in my soul.
"I know right. Let's have some tea together." South states as North already passes by him.
"I'll carry it outside."

"Oh! Thanks a bunch, brother!" South hums, happy. I glare at him, not understanding the world anymore. What has happened to them?! Last time I was involved with them, they absolutely HATED each other!
'Very good question. Now go and ask.'
"But that would be really impolite, wouldn't it be?"
*'But I **NEED** to know!'*
"BE quiet!"

"Are you alright, Indo?"
"Uh- yes, sorry."
"Why don't you follow me? I wanted to get some sweets anyways before settling down."
"Sure."

South Korea shows me the ground floor of his house and I can't help but admire it. I help him carry some sweets and we go to the back garden. It's much more luscious that the front porch and beautifully been taken care off. North Korea already awaits us, and I get more unsure again. South sits next to North and I across them. North is quick and quiet to fill all three cups. Then, South opens the box I've carrying and shows its content to his brother.
"Here, North- I got your favorite snack. I heard you mumble about how upset you were when you've eaten all of it." South laughs and North takes the box, even smiling a little. HOLY MOLY is this real??
"You- You two- " I stutter, utterly confused. North sighs.
"Indo, you should have seen it coming that me and South couldn't hate each other forever. Grow up."
"Especially since we don't have to deal with politics anymore. It makes life so much easier."
"You... really got over your differences with each other? After everything? After the war and separation? I mutter.
"Don't understand it wrong, it was a long and tedious process to get where we are now. I've just started trusting South like a month ago."
"Aw! So, you are trusting me!"
"JUST- Just that you wouldn't murder me in my sleep!" North grumbles, turning his head away and his brother giggles. I feel a switch click in my brain and suddenly I feel like vomiting again. Wow. They both really did it. They forgave each other and are now

growing together again. That is beautiful. Why couldn't I be like that sooner? It's so stupid! I'm stupid.
"Ah?! Indo, are you okay?! What's wrong?!" South brings me back to reality and I look at him.
"What?"
"You're crying!" he looks worried, North's expression seems puzzled as well.
"O-Oh... well..." I chuckle bitterly and try to explain what is going on in my mind. Both listen with high interest and North even hands me tissues again. That is nice. I envy their relationship, almost.

"Wow Indo, I never expected to hear something this deep from you." South Korea mumbles after I was done. It's embarrassing, but I feel a lot better now for some reasons.
"Y-Yeah... I've been a childish idiot my entire life. I want to be better."
"That conclusion is very mature of you." North Korea says, nodding a little.
"Really...?" I inhale.
"Yes! We're very proud of you for that!" South Korea gives me a positive smile and I smile a little as well.
"Ah... uh- thank you."
"North knows great exercises against anger management!" South, positive as ever, exclaims, even making a motion to present his brother to me. He scoffs in an amused way.
"And my brother does way too much relaxing, in my opinion. Surely, you can learn from him too. But not too much."
"H e – "
"I'm just stating the truth."
"You bully."
"I love you too, brother."

I blink at them, feeling a whole lot better about myself now.
'Perhaps we should expend our circle of knowledge more frequently.'
"Eh?"
'To see stuff like this. And grow more mature with experience.'
"Sure... we can try to do that"
'Let's get better then.'
"Let's change."

Extra Chapter

I keep watching the sun set. I had a fight with Dad and left the house afterwards. He is so cruel to me. Even though I've barely defied him. Even Belgium and Luxembourg have less stress with him, it is as if I am his scape goat... the scape goat for the loss of his former glory. I remember the time Germany was at my house and talked about the concept of scape goats and how it can help a community to bond again, except for me, I'm being left out. A cool breeze flushes by and even though I wear my trusty scarf and a pullover, I shiver. It's getting dark and cold. It's already September. I sigh. I can't go home now, I just can't. Maybe I can at Germany's place. Surely, I can sleep there for the night. I take a good, long look at the sunset. The sun has almost vanished behind the ocean. I still miss my land sometimes. The great architecture and the food and people, but I guess it can't be helped. I exhale again and get up, making my way back to town.

Reaching the German family's house, it already dark. As I ring the door bell, Germany's father, Third Reich opens the door. I always get nervous around him, even though he changed and readjusted his goals as well as swearing to never touch politics ever again. He did terrible things, yet I have respect in him still, so I stay polite.
"Good even, Reich."
"Holland? What are you doing here this late?" *he asks, slightly confused. I grid my teeth as I don't quite approve of the nickname, yet I don't call him out on it.*
"Uh, I can't really go home right now..." I mumble, fiddling with my fingers. Reich sighs.
"Come in." *he steps aside to let me in. I look at him, thankful and get inside the warm house. I walk into the living room and see Germanys brother East reading. Weimar sits on an armchair and the Empire hums from the kitchen. A lot of men in this household.*
"Ah, Niederlande, willkommen!" *suddenly, Weimar greets me with a friendly smile. We had great dealership in the past so we are cool with each other. The other two men notice me now too.*
"Hey Neth."

"Hallo!"
"Hey Weimar, East and Empire."
"What brings you here?"
"Uh... Dutch."
"Oh, I see. Again?"
"Ja..."
"Don't worry, you can spend the night here!"
"Thank you."

"West is upstairs if you're wondering." *East points at the stairs and then corrects his glasses.*
"Alright, sorry for disturbing you all this late."
"It's no problem." *I hear as I already go up the stairs. I wish I was really part of the family; they are so friendly now. I walk down the rather dark hallway, unbothered to turn on the light until I reach Germany's room. I knock.*
I open the door carefully, to not disturb if he's doing anything that requires focus.
Next thing I see, nothing could have had me prepared for. The room is dimly lit and at the end of it, Germany and... and Poland(?!) sit on the bed, Poland going for my best friend's throat and shoulder. Germany is whimpering slightly, grabbing onto him, very content with the behavior of the other male. I grab onto the door, my mind racing with thousands of thoughts. When did that happen?! I didn't know those two were a thing! Why is Germany letting this happen?? In my state of shock, I simply keep watching as they make out.
"Hn.. P...Polen~"
"Shh, Niemcy~"

OKAY, I THINK IT IS TIME I SHOULD INTERWIEN??
I (awkwardly) clear my throat. Immediately, both go onto distance, looking with widen eyes to the door.
"Neth?!"
"Uh, good evening." I say, and watch as Poland's face changes to various emotions, yet Germany is the first one to regain composure.
"How long have you been there?!"
"Long enough to hear you moan- " I say, traumatized. Germany's cheeks start burning and Poland covers himself with the bed sheets.
"I'm so sorry."
"Well, I kind of just got here..."

"Because of Dutch?"
"...Mhm."
"Oh my, I'm sorry to hear that. Please, come in." *he invites and I close the door. I will ignore what has happened, for now. I sit down next to Germany and watch Poland getting closer to my best friend, eyeing me carefully.*
"I'm... not going to eat you or anything."
"Ah!" the Polish squeaks and is embarrassed.
"Sorry..." he mumbles and Germany touches his... I guess boyfriends' hair.

"I didn't know you two were a thing."
"Well, no one is supposed to know yet."
"Aha."
"Neth..."
"Yeah, don't worry. I've seen nothing."
"Thank you."
"What did he do this time."
"Raging alcoholic. It's getting worse."
"Oh, that is not good."
"I guess." I sigh, glaring ahead. I hear shifting.
"Uhm, your Dad is a raging alcoholic, Neth?" *Poland quietly asks.*
"Frankly, yes."
"O-Oh."
"And there is nothing we can do." *Germs sighs, he is the only one who understands my pain.*
"What? Why?"
"Because I'm the scape goat for everyone's fucking problems, Poland!" I say rather loudly and a little more aggressive, standing up. I'm just fed up with it. It's only a matter of time before I... before I...
"Neth!" *Germany scolds me for being loud.*
"What?! Just because his problems are over doesn't mean it invalidates mine!"
"He never even said that!" *Germs grabs my hand and squeezes it. I look at him and he stares back at me. I take deep breaths.*
"Sorry." *I mumble and sit down again, sighing.*

"Neth..."
"..."
"I think... you should sleep." *Germany says after a while and I feel my*

heart ripping apart. Usually he doesn't brush it off, why this time? Is it because of Poland? It must be. Of course, he'd prefer his boyfriend over his best friend... I knew it. Now he likes his times with others, he doesn't even want to comfort me anymore like before. Perhaps he has grown tired of it? I'd understand why. I swallow heavy.
"Y...Yeah. Sorry for disturbing." I say, my voice getting stuck in my throat. They want to be alone; they don't want me here. As I get up the world around me seems surreal. Germany says something but I don't even hear it, closing the door behind me.
This hurts... a lot.
It takes a lot to not tear up, and I manage to control myself. I walk downstairs again. East and Weimar have left, Rech is reading the papers and the Empire is eating pudding. He notices me first.

"Hello again."
"Hey..." I respond, seeing that Reich perks his eyes above the papers to follow the conversation along.
"Is everything okay?" *Empire, if you knew...*
"Uhm... Germany wants to be alone at the moment, so I don't know what to do." I rub my head and avoid eye contact. Reich picks up on that.
"Is everything alright between you two?"
"Yes. Yes. Of course." I hastily respond. Despite the pain, I can't just throw Germany under the bus. Do they even know that Poland is here?
"Well, if my son doesn't want you in this room, you're free to sleep on the couch, or ask East." *Reich continues and offers me alternatives.*
"Ah, thank you, I'll ask East."

Andso, I go upstairs again, passing Germanys room with a heavy heart.

13| Aquaintance

Netherlands's POV

It has been a week since Indonesia and my friend shouted at each other. It's unpleasant when they fight... especially when I'm the topic. A whole 7 days passed already? It really doesn't feel that long. I've spent all my time either in this house, the small garden or outside the village, far away from any other country. While keeps being grumpy, Malay and is pretty nice and Phil is trying to get my fear under control, giving me breathing exercises etc. Indonesia on the other hand pretty much avoided me and to be honest I feel sad about it. I should be relieved, but I cannot lie that I enjoyed the attention a little bit. A tiny bit. My mental health got better though, at least I'm kind of stable. But why? I don't understand why it is bothering me so much, last time I was here my country was doing things to strengthen the bond between Indonesia and my them. After I told her about everything as well-, I keep wondering. Why is Indo able to break my mental health like that? It's been ages, and I was always rather well at controlling myself. I keep philosophizing over it. Could there be more than just that? I mean what he says doesn't change a fact, yet hearing it from his mouth, with that anger... it's just... different somehow.
Urgh, it's happening all over again. My emotions keep being all over the place. How sad. Phil said, or more like 'suggested' the fact that Indo likes me and since I enjoy the attention... do I like him? Well, I would like to get along, yes, but everything else that is implying all of this is bullshit- right?
I'm not too sure. It is complicated. I mean- I still feel bad every time he walks past me like I don't exist... but he looks sad to. Does he regret? Does he feel guilty? I should be feeling that, not him! Or is it something else? Feelings are stupid.
But who am I kidding? Why am I thinking about that so much? Even if, he hates me. The real me. Netherlands. He's glad I'm 'dead'. I feel myself growing frustrated with my pathetic self again, but I shake it off by exhaling. Phil said it's no good overthinking everything, I'll try to follow this lead.

My friend keeps trying to get me to leave them behind and burn this town to the ground. I usually shake it off, but lately the thought has been in my mind more often. Like an intruding thought. I would never have to deal with such people anymore and I'd have no worries of ever coming back to such a terrible place.
That sounds... nice.
That's the plan, now.

Anyways. I leave the guest room and walk downstairs, my mind staying empty for the meantime. As I was about to run around the corner I spotted- more like heard Indonesia and she talking. I quickly quit moving, staying perfectly still behind the corner, eavesdropping on their conversation.

"- so- I wanted to apologize for over-reacting a week ago. I realized it was disrespectful and I should have controlled myself better since a long time ago." I listen as Indo apologizes to her. I feel my hand balling into a fist, just to release them. He is... sorry? What?
"**Finally.**" she only scoffs, seemingly not happy at his attempt for apologizing.
"**You really should have, and as you rightfully said, 'a long time ago'. My man here is really sentimental with yelling and stuff like that and we both know how you feel about him.**" she 100% agrees with Indo while making him the bad guy, but to my frustration she started referring to me. I should tell her to stop using me as an excuse for basically everything. This entire commercial last week has been her fault too. Am I becoming a scape goat? A person everyone can blame their mistakes on? Again?
"Right. Sorry" Indo dares saying.
"**Mhm. Past 'n stuff.**" she sighs and rubs the back of her neck, then she starts to chuckle slightly, seeming feeling amused- catching both me and Indo off guard. What is so funny now?
"**Seems like the both of us snap easily when we talk about the Netherlands and what he was like, so in the end we DO have something in common, very sadly.**" she adds. Indo just looked awkwardly to the side- seeming to not wanting to have anything in common with her. Oh, I can definitely see them being arch-enemies.
"**Not that I want to have anything in common with an idiot with you.**" she says in typical fashion and facepalms.
"But is it true what you said? Long before Phil came in?"

"About what?"
"Well- the things you yelled at me."
"Did it sound like I'm lying?"
"I don't know. I met you a week ago." Indo looks at her again. The woman laughs drying, and I fear her getting aggressive again.
"Fair I suppose," her expression turns annoyed and threatening within a second.
"But seriously, never pull Bullshit like that again, understand?" she says, sounding exactly as her expression... and almost like the time she was threatening to kill Philippines. I already tense my muscles in case she'll do anything. I feel Indo being uncomfortable and he just nod, trying to play it off.
"Alright, alright. I get it. I'm sorry. No need to get devilish again. Allah." he says with a voice crack at the end. The female sighs, walking past him- only to stop right beside him, staring intensely. On that, Indo straightened up, sweating.
"You should talk with your 'Interest' again." she hisses, sounding way to inhuman for the current situation.
"H-Huh? - " Indo sounds surprised, even threatened.
"You have been avoiding him for the past week, it really upsets him." she explains really oblivious to Indo.
"And if you make him sad again... ohohohoho." She laughs, ominously. My heart sinks and I'm both worried and also a bit sour at her telling him this. I am cringing. A lot.
Why in the world, no, the entire multiverse is she telling him this! That is so embarrassing!
Very embarrassing...

"Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't know it upsets him that much." *he chuckles awkwardly and I just want to disappear into thin air that that point. AGAIN, WHY?!*
"It's a little difficult, you understand. The only way of emotion I'm sensing through him is with gesture and, uh, 'mouth-expression'(?), or however you want to call it." *the smaller country keeps going.*
"I- I thought that he didn't want to interact to me since I flipped out last week. And since I kind of have anger management problem..." *Indo says slowly- sounding quieter and sadder at the end. He sounds so much more mature and reasonable. What happened within one single week? That's crazy.*
"I also have still a lot of questions about basically everything. I uh-

he told me that you two are not from this world. It's very hard to believe, but it makes sense, for example on how you two showed up here without anyone from outside noticing." *Indo continues, finally taking a big step away from the woman, moving into my direction. My brain was processing the information with full force- loud voices filling my brain, mostly intruding thoughts. But in reality, all I did was standing behind the corner in death silence, motionless.*
"**Maybe somewhen else.**" *she answers, rather unmotivated, having a petty irony in her voice which couldn't be overheard, now taking a second step, going further away from me and also distancing herself from Indo.*
"And when is the time you will answer them?" *Indo still asks, curious.*
"**I'll tell you when, be patient for once.**" *Liana answers, almost growling in annoyance, then she turns around fully, and left without letting Indo any time to reply- and I know for sure that he wants to question her so bad. And she doesn't. I lean against the wall, looking at the ceiling- still processing. What has changed within Indo. His 'core' of thinking, seems different. My brain is really slow today.*

While I was thinking my mind into flames, I got interrupted as force is suddenly applied against me. Not really hard though, I didn't even shake or move a foot back. I mean I'm just standing here like a wall. She always mocks me with the word 'flag pole', so I'm used to it. Not that I enjoy that name... It's a stupid as Holland. Holland is a region, two regions actually, therefore not me. I'm a country. I turn my head and to be honest I wasn't really surprised to see Indo gathering himself on the floor. My brain connects the dots. He fell after accidentally running into me after parting ways with her. Maybe it's because of the working speed of my brain today, but it feels disconnected with reality. Perhaps I just need a good, long nap and some food. Oh well. And now he knows I was listening the entire time. I wonder how he'll react now? I gulp and hesitantly offer him a hand to pull him up. Indonesia stares at my hand for a moment, then smiles a bit and warmly at me with soft eyes. The sudden gentleness in contrast to his usual overly eager personality flabbergasts me, and as he takes it, I even startle a bit, standing up. I can't help it and smile a bit too, finally he isn't ignoring me. We both look at each other and smile for a few moments... really wholesome. you know. I... like it like this, it's comfortable.
"Thank you." *Indo thanks me.*

"I wanted to apologize to you as well, for uh, both my childish behavior and my neglection towards you for the past week." *he speaks very clearly and honest as he looks at me.*
"I've realized that it was stupid. So, sorry for that." h*e says and it feels like a stone was lifted from my heart. What a wonderful moment... that I can see that. Maybe there IS a chance that... we could be friends in the far future. Then, I realize that I am still holding Indos hand. And he is still holding mine. OH NO. And THEN I start blushing.*
I shouldn't be doing this; we are barely acquainted.
But he likes me? Does that make it okay?
I-I should be just for sure. I want to take my hand back, so I let go, and take- in conclusion- my hand back. I touch my own cheek- and it feels hot. In neutral reaction I pull my hood more over my face then it already is, just to make sure that I hide myself blushing. GOD WHY IS THIS SO EMBARRASSING-

Indonesia's POV

I watch as my 'Mate' hides his face even more in his hood, seemingly embarrassed. After being at North- and South Koreas house for a week I feel totally different. I feel just, calm inside, which is nice. Sure, I can have my phases, like every person but I feel a lot more collected now.
'That was indeed a fine week.'
"Yes."
'Now we can focus on him!'
"Exactly!" me and my thoughts are also a little more in synch with each other and less fighting. So, I just tilt my head to my shoulder- watching my embarrassed friend. How cute. Sad that we couldn't hold hands longer though. Like the last time, it's really warm, yet also scared. It makes it so intriguing and interesting. I really hope my apology was good enough and we can start over.
As we remain next to each other, my gaze wanders around the room and eventually stops at the window. The outside is warm, but not too hot. Malay went sun bathing today for extra Vitamin D, which he proclaims he needs because he spends so much time inside the house nowadays. Silly Malay.
An idea jumps in my head.
Wait. wait. Waittttt- I think I just got an idea~
'A good one?'

"Yeah. You're thinking what I'm thinking?"
'I'm your brain, duh.'
"Then why are you even asking in the first place?"
'Just because.' I slightly chuckle, mostly at myself, regaining his attention. He simply stares down at me, letting go of his hood, waiting. Again, I could feel that he's still embarrassed. I stop chuckling and smile gently at him.

"I was thinking if we could do something together this evening! If you're up for it." I start the conversation again. My man seems curious, tilting his head in a questioning manner. I flush a bit.
"You uh- want to go out? Like on a walk? I know a pretty descend spot with a great view, and today is quite a nice evening. We have great weather and the sun is setting soon, so we could go to one of the hills and watch the sunset if you like-" I ask, hoping for him to smile or nod or at least agree. He stares at me for a little while, but then nods, smiling. He '*said*' yes. *'Yay. Great start I suppose.'*
"Yay indeed." My heart starts beating faster and excitement bubbles up inside of me and I start grinning like a kid.
"Oh, great! Let's go then. It will be definitely worth the walk." I announce, the man nods and walks past me, towards the door. I turn around one last time, just for good measurement, and spot 3 people watching us from around the corner. As soon they see me looking at them;
-Phil gives me a thumbs up, smiling bright and confidently
-The woman seems rather irritated, she seems to be figuring out her own motivations and thoughts behind her actions as she gives me the OK-sign, her gaze warning me at the same time not to dare to mess this up though.
-Malay making a gesture to follow him and not waste any of our precious time alone.
I tilt my head and smile, turning away from them following my 'Mate'.

We walk in silence a while. It's not like I can proper conversation with him like that, but instant I enjoy the evening. It takes a good 15 minutes until we reach the top of the hill with the large tree. The view is amazing and the atmosphere is great, at this point I really wish it would have been a date we're on.
'Is it not one?'

"Of course not. I would've asked for a date specifically."
'That is sad. Perhaps next time.'
"Maybe."
I stand in the long grass and watch over the town to the sun vanishing in the ocean. Quite lovely. The sky is orange and there is a soft brise. My 'Mate' sits down at the bottom of the tree- leaning against the log. I simply decide to sit next to him. We both look at the sunset in silence. But I still feel bad for... his breakdowns... they're my fault.
'Yeah, we haven't apologized enough yet.'
"True." I take a deep breath.

"Hey... uh- Mate?" I start, my mood already rolling down the hill. He turns his head to me, interested. I feel my heart beginning to race.
"Uhm. I already said it, but again, I-I'm sorry for yelling a week ago... I have said I should have controlled myself better, and I'm really trying..." I apologize once again, still feeling as if I haven't said enough, trying to clear my consciousness. He simply looks at me and then nods, turning his head back to the sunset afterwards. Wait what. I assume that he was meaning something like 'ok'. But then he didn't seem to care that much in turning his head away this fast.
Excuse me?
I am pouring out my emotions here! I would have hoped for a little bit more reaction at least! I pout silently, but can't help it to not be mad at him. Well, a nod is still a nod, I suppose. He has agreed to my statement. I sigh silently and smile a bit. I turn my head a little more and look at him. He still isn't looking at me and I only see the side of his face. It's been like this for a while now; Even though I can't see all of it, I feel happy and content looking at him, simply being around him. My head in the clouds, I start feeling more confident in myself again. My eyes wander down and see his body until they land at his hand in the grass, which is supporting his current sitting position. After hesitating for a solid 5 seconds, I actually decide to put my hand on top of his. His hand feels warm as always, veiny and rough. His hand flinches a bit by the sudden contact. I watch his muscles tense beneath the fabric, he seems unsure for a moment, then his head turn to me again. He keeps the facade up for a moment and then relaxes, even smiling back a little,

locking his hand in mine.
Now it's my turn to be the one feeling myself blushing, but I let it happen. We continue to sit like that- in comfortable silence.

But then my 'Mates' expression changes, and he seems more serious, and almost worried? I must be imagining things, he has a more serious expression.
"Uh, what's wrong?" I ask, carefully eyes his body language but hopefully not misunderstanding. The man though basically just keeps looking at me, then he takes his hand back, rubbing it against his other hand. In reaction I also take my hand back, looking away as well. He tries to fidget with his hands, but quickly gives up, rather awkwardly. Well now I'm confused-
-And then it hit me. Oh right, I'm still an idiot. I forgot he doesn't talk. To solve that communication barrier, I quickly take out my phone and open a notes app, so he can type what he wants to say. I hand him the phone. My 'Mate' takes it from me and starts writing, handing me my phone back after a few minutes.
'Those minutes felt like FOREVER.'
- I was wondering. You've said that you apologize and that your behavior was disrespectful, but do you still mean what you said about Neth being... you know, dead for good? - I read, pausing for a moment.
"Did I really mean it? Or was it just because the heat of the moment?"
'Of course you didn't mean it!'
"I don't know."
'What do you not know?!'
I exhale and take a moment to think, looking at the sunset. My mind is racing at this point.
"I-I... Actually, I'm not sure." I softly start my line of thought. My 'Mate' tilts his head- looking intensely at me. Surely, he won't let me change the subject at any point now. He wants the answer. I lean against the tree. I take and another silent moment to think about Netherlands.
His appearance after the colonization... the acting of me and the others around him combined with his reactions and change of heart, and I feel a weird feeling rising inside of me. It closes my throat and my stomach hurts. Why is this happening now, I was doing so well! I can't really describe it- it isn't sadness or anger- I realized that I'm starting to panic. WHY AM I PANICKING?!

'You can do it! Remember what we learned last week!'
"I- I can't, it won't let me!" my breathing gets a little heavier, yet I can still think. Though, the vision in the corner of my eyes gets dark

"U-Uh- Y-You see... I'm not sure about it because... because..." I take another breath, trying to reason logically and not with emotions alone.
"There are so many different emotions all over the place."
" I... Haven't seen him in years... now I never will."
"A-and we haven't had the best past... and then the things your f-friend said..."
"I-I just don't know what to believe or how to f-feel anymore-"
I desperately try to explain, looking at my own two hands. They are shaking for some reasons. I start to breath uneven... I feel my pulse in my head. It's very uncomfortable, and making me feel a bit dizzy. Shit- I'm most likely going to break down in a few moments- too much emotional stress. But where is it coming from? I did come to terms with it, haven't I?
...have I?
Trying to stay calm makes the situation even worse and in this condition... I basically don't have any other choice but to give in. Tears form in my eyes, making my vision really blurry. I feel them rolling down my cheeks, falling. The reflection of the light makes them seem like pearls for a moment, before they hit either the grass or me.
I really don't want to cry.
Not again because of the past trauma.
Not because of Neth...
Especially not in front of him.

But then it happens- I can't hold myself back any longer and I break down from the stress, sobbing uncontrollably.
"S-Sorry, I-I-" I try to form words without my breath hitching it into oblivion (which obliviously isn't working). Suddenly I was shut up mid-sentence by arms warping around me, pulling me close into a warm hug. I feel the firm yet soft fabric on my face and simply burry it into him, closing my eyes. I can feel his look boring into me from above, making me feel even smaller and more pathetic than before, yet also a calm, cool, comforting aura is radiating from him. It gives me the feeling that I can cry in peace, even though he is

here, so I hug back and continue crying, letting everything stressing me out for once.

14| Lingering Danger

Netherlands's POV

I hold Indonesia close as he is sobbing. Thank God my coat is water-repellent. This situation is so strange, and I never could have imagined I'd find myself in one of them. He really feels guilty, huh? It must have been centuries that I've seen him cry. Usually, he makes me cry. I watch his big, shiny tears roll down my coat, and I feel very bad about myself. Damnit. I really did it- Indo is crying... because of me, again.
Great job Nether! It's so dump that my mental state went downhill as soon as I arrived here- but others mental states are getting pulled down as well and I feel like that's my fault. I am the catalyst behind it, after all.
If I never had shown up again, none of this would have been happening. Perhaps putting them out of their misery would help everyone. What? Why was I thinking that?
"I-I'm sorry-" *Indo whispers through sobbing and I feel my soul crack.*
"I'm sorry! I'm sorry! **I'm sorry! I'm sorry!**" *he repeats the phrase again and again, grabbing more onto the fabric of my coat, making me nervous in doing something very wrong. I didn't want this to happen!*
I exhale internal- pushing that feeling as far away as I can, taking on the responsibility to fix this- somehow. At least calm him, that he can heal. And it won't help anyone if I break down as well...

First, I think about what I should do. The hugging was more or less instinct, yet I cannot deny that the feeling of having a real human in my arms is comforting, I missed it so much. She doesn't radiate much or any heat at all. Her body is cold as ice, this is a welcome change. And since Indo is willing to change, I believe it should be okay if I keep warming up to him. Careful with what I'm doing, I lean against the tree some more, giving myself a more comfortable position, then I pull Indo up that he can rest his head on my chest.
I've always been termed as a great pillow for some reason. Not entirely sure why they thought I'm fluffy(?), maybe because I'm tall and warm

all the time. I don't know.
Indo is still sobbing, yet it already seems to be working as his breathing is less hitched and his muscles feel less tense. After hesitating, I slowly take his hat off and start running my fingers through his hair, like the first night. As before, it's very soft- I'm amazed. Like a cloud. I could feel this on my skin the whole day- Wait what. I feel my cheeks heating and I look away from the smaller person, back to the sun set. He had picked my favorite spot without even knowing it is my favorite. That's so sweet. While caressing with me fingers, I keep holding him close with my other hand/arm, so he would slip out of my grip and that we sit/lay more comfortable. What a nice evening, the sun is deep red and paints the sky and clouds beautifully.

After I've mentally calmed myself by enjoying nature, I dare to look down to Indo again. I've said it already, but holy shit, I honestly never thought I'd be at this point at any stage of my life. It was always far out of reach. But here I am now anyways...
I keep running my fingers though his hair and lean my head against the tree, tired of keeping it straight over my shoulder and close my eyes, thinking about what Indo said and how he reacted to it, trying to think of an answer to my question that started this whole mess. An 'I'm not sure' is neither a yes nor no...
After some time I stop thinking, getting bored of it- I can ask Indo again later, I hope. So, I just let my eyes closed and waited for Indo to calm. I seriously hope I don't accidentally fall asleep.

As the sun vanished completely from the sky (not sure how much time that is), which felt like a really long time, I feel Indo tugging on my coat. I open my eyes and need a moment to readjust. I must have dozen off a little. I stretch as best as possible and return my attention to the Asian Country. He looks up to me, his eyes still blood shot and glossy. His eyes feel massive to me, and it's kind of adorable. I straighten up again from leaning to sitting, running my hand mindlessly over his cheek. It's a little crispy due to all the salt. I wipe the salt and rest of the tears away with my thumb, feeling warm and satisfied inside. That is, such a nice feeling. It makes me exhale deeply. So, Indo really does make me feel something Perhaps... it is possible. But I should lay myself onto it too much until as this is over.
Indo himself had calmed, still breathing uneven, and now he looks at me with tired, yet thankful eyes.

That's- that's good, right? I'm doing the right thing here-

I let go of his hair and warp my arm around him. The smaller man closes his eyes, embracing the warmth that is radiating through my coat. It seems to work, he is calming down more.
"I'm... S-Sorry for that..." *Indo suddenly whispers again, really quiet, I barely understand it. In my moment of relaxation, I smile and open my mouth to comfort him, yet I luckily stop myself at the very last second, and just sigh.*
Oh no, I almost talked with him! My heart rate spikes and anxiety hits me. I've almost ruined it. Almost...
That was a close one. Way to close. I look back at the sunset, which isn't really a sunset at this point of time anymore- it's really dark already, the last bit of light fading away and the darkness of the night is embraced by the earth, you already can see some stars too. The streetlights in the small Countryhuman town have turned on. Soon, the way back won't be visible. Barely thinking, I want to stand up but immediately fall back to my original sitting position. Right, Indonesia. He looks so peaceful right now.
But I really need a light source. It's so dark. And if I have to carry him, it'll be even harder to not trip or accidentally loose the path. I debate with myself.
Of course, I could just whip out a small flame to light my way, but what if Indo saw it? But he already knows that I'm not from this world, so would him seeing my magic really be so far off? It wouldn't hurt much, would it? I could simply teleport too, I guess, but I don't want to teleport inside the town. What if someone sees it?!

I keep thinking and come to the conclusion to talk with flames as light source. As I prepare myself to get up, I need to realize that Indo has cuddled himself in my chest. His breathing is steady and deep. I think that he fell asleep- or at least passed out from the energy loss while crying. It happens. I mean, I know I'm a pillow- but falling asleep on me? Really?
This causes me to start blushing, hard. How embarrassing. No one EVER cuddled into my chest like that before. He is- so cute! No!
And even though no one is here, I put my hands on my face to hide it, as if it isn't hidden enough already. My heart is beating very, very fast in my chest. Okay- fuck, calm down. I take deep breaths and take my hands off my face, summoning a little fire-spirit. It can move by itself

and they are very friendly, even a little childish. I hang out with them when I get lonely. The spirit seems excited to see me and the light bounces around me a bit looking. I smile slightly and look at Indo again. Meanwhile Indo lies peaceful on my chest- not noticing anything of the emotional mess I am right now, nor the magic. Well, that's a good thing I suppose.
I carefully put my arms on his back and beneath his legs, slowly lifting him while standing up. I sigh as I stand full, taking another look at him. My light source has landed on my shoulder, watching as well. I then shoo it away in motion to light my way and so it does. As I start walking, I feel Indo pressing himself tighter against me, making it a little easier for myself to hold him. God damnit... I swallow hard and my cheeks keep burning. Shaking my head, I decide to focus on walking back to the others. Really difficult objective, if I say so myself.

Philippines's POV

I watch the stars from the window. There's the great bear, and the little bear. I sigh. It's getting late. You know it is getting late in summer when even the sun is gone, giving a clear view on the stars in the sky. The endless universe... and there really are more? How much endlessness can there be? It's not comprehendible in the slightest. I look on the street from the window, only a dim street light is giving fade color to the things around it. In the past they were brighter, but since Italy couldn't stop complaining, Slovakia, the electrician that he is, found a way to dim the light, together with Singapore, our programmer. Netherlands and Indonesia haven't come back yet. They went out two hours ago. Perhaps they're just star gazing, like me. But the night is surprisingly cool and... It's probably just me but I'm already worrying.

"Still nothing?" I hear someone asking behind me. I finch at the sudden question in the silent house and turn my head to see Malay, who is handing me some tea. After the first shock I take the cup.
"No... nothing. Aren't you still supposed to be streaming?"
"Pee break. I wanted tea anyways before chugging energy drinks, thought I give you some too."
"How thoughtful."
"I still need to make it up to you."
"Yes you do."

"Eh- they are going to be alright." a female voice says from the stairs. The inhuman being stands there looking at us. I sigh. Since when has she been there? I carefully take a sip of the tea and look outside again.
"What makes you so sure?" I mumble loud enough for the others to hear it.
"Well, I really don't think that anything can hurt you inside those walls except your own stupidity."
"Hey!" Malay scoffs.
"I'm telling the truth. Humans have been destroying each other since the beginning of time. And that for the most idiotic reasons imaginable." she rolls her eyes and Malay sighs.
"I hate that you're right."

Malay very soon says his good bye, leaving to keep streaming. He has been doing it quite a lot the past weeks. I need to drag him outside another time. A day without the internet perhaps. I look outside again and she stays in the room too. Is she waiting too? But she just said to not worry. Can she even worry? What irony.
Soon, right as I empty my cup, I spot a dim silhouette of a tall figure walking towards our house in the streetlights. But he is alone...? No, wait, now that he is coming closer, I think they are carrying someone- WAIT THAT'S INDO! -
What happened?!
Is he hurt?!
I get off the ledge of the window, leaving me cup there, almost falling to the floor.
"What the hell are you doing?"
"Netherlands is coming back! And he is carrying Indo?!" I almost yell the second part of the sentence. Her eyes narrow in confusion I rush to the door and open it, yet before I was able to go through, the Netherlands already stand in front of me.
How fast is this man?!

"Is he okay?! what happ-" I was cut off by someone slamming my mouth with quite a force shut.
"Calm down, damnit. Indonesia is only sleeping." the woman whispers in my ear and I freeze on the spot, shivering. Not only because she is so close, but also because I'm still in terror from last time she came into a 1m range. My heartbeat is quite fast and I

pray that she wouldn't hurt me. I nod as best as I can and then she releases me. I almost loose balance and gasp, coving my mouth with my own hand for a moment.
Nothing happened, relax, Philippines.
As I take a closer look at Indo, I need to admit that she's right. What luck. I exhale, still worried.
"My apologies, come in, please." I say, quieter. The Netherlands steps inside the house, and doesn't waste time, he proceeds to carry Indo up the stairs to his room. We two look after him and I still feel slightly uncomfortable. I hear her chuckling drily.
"He was blushing. I'm not so sure if I really like that development after all." she suddenly says- grinning in an unsettling way, further building tension. Oh God. My body feels terrified. I know she won't harm Neth... which leaves Indonesia as her only target.
No! I can't let Indo get hurt! He doesn't deserve that for simply liking someone!

"Please don't do anything to him!"
"Or what? You are the last person that can stop me."
"Please, I'll do anything!"
"*Anything?* Oh well, if you insist~ Now we're talking~" she turns to me and I swallow hard.
"Y-Yes, anything."
"Ohoho~ Follow me, then. It's cute to see how you're willing to throw everything away for others. That is adorable." she laughs, showing me her fully sadistic side.

She will be enjoying this, and I won't.

15| Invite

Indonesia's POV

I wake up, my head feeling heavy and my body feeling sore. I groan loudly and very long, rolling on my back I stare at a ceiling.
Huh?
What?
Wasn't the last thing I saw the sky? Or more like... him? Not even taking fully in where I am I already flush up.
"Urghh..." I groan and put my hands on my face. Then I put them down again. This clearly isn't the sky and I'm not outside anymore. I blink a few times slowly sit up- my vision getting all funky for a solid 30 seconds. I'm questioning reality until I realize that I'm in my room...
"Wait what?"
'How did we get here?'
"Good question. What happened again?"
'Uhm, well... As I previously mentioned I remember being outside with our 'Mate' and then-'
'oh.'
"OH, WAIT"- my memories from yesterday come back, hitting me almost back in the bed and like a brick. I did not just mentally break down in front of him. I sigh in disappointment of myself. But despite this being, all in all this time period being probably one the most embarrassing, I surprisingly feel a lot better now, or well- after that happened. Way lighter and almost refreshed. That, if my body wasn't aching in PAIN. After readjusting every muscle in my body, I dare to look at the time on my phone. Someone must have put it up for charging for me. How nice.
Currently, it's 9am. How did I sleep that long? I normally don't sleep that long. After a moment of staring onto my phone I snap back into reality, finally stand up- realizing that I'm just wearing pants. Eh? I think I've slept until now... and I don't recall waking in between now and passing out yesterday...
So that means-

Someone else must have done that.

I slightly blush at the thought someone seeing my bare body without my permission.
Whoever it was will get slapped by me-
I sigh, my head starting to hurt again, it still feels a bit heavy.
I take a few more moments to calm myself. In the end- I admitted to myself that it's kind of nice to not have slept in a dirty hoodie. In my laziness I keep the pants from yesterday and just pull a shirt over my head and put my hat on. Oh well, let's head downstairs.
'The person responsible still gets a slap.'
"Sure."

Then I walk outside my room and make my way downstairs.

Downstairs, I was greeted by two voices yelling from the kitchen. Oh, dear God, they're going at it again- I really don't have the nerves for that in the moment. I envy Phil for his patience. Lazily, I spy around the corner to see Malay and the woman stupidly serious arguing about the right type of chocolate. She was arguing about high dark chocolate (<70% Cacao) being way better than white chocolate (in her usually rude way) and that white chocolate isn't technically chocolate since there is no Cacao in it, while Malay tried arguing against it. Phil sits between them, not being a part of the conversation at all. He's shrunk into the chair, quiet and oddly looking, not eating. His eyes seem dead. It's shockingly different from his normal self. They haven't noticed me yet- being too busy with themselves. I'm not sure if I want to interrupt them, but then my 'Mate' turns his head and spots me. He smiles and gives me a little wave underneath the table. Well- So much to the topic of 'not being spotted' - eh. I smile back, relieved, and finally stepped inside the kitchen. Now also the others noticed me, stopping the argument immediately.

"Morning Indo!" Malay greets me first, sounding excited and way less annoyed than two seconds ago. He's followed by a **"Sup"** from the woman. Only Phil isn't. He doesn't even seem to be here, mentally that is.
"Uhm... Is Phil okay?" I question, getting worried.
"He's just tired." the woman shrugs and eats. Malay seems unsure but doesn't comment on it. Look at them, despite the argument she

seems to be in a rather good mood- probably amused about the rather pissed looking Malay, but it's kind of weird in comparison to the past week. She likes the world burning, I see. I sit down on my chair, getting myself some food from the table.
"Don't you want to eat anything, Phil?"
"Not hungry."
"O-Oh... make sure to get some rest, then."
"..." I'm met with no responds. I press my jaw and look at him, a little scared. I've been knowing Phil my entire life and he never behaves like this, even on his bad days.
"So- where were we?" Mal asked, looking at her. She stares back.
"White chocolate isn't chocolate, but one moment-" she then looked at me- Malays mouth leaving an oblivious fake gasp. Oh, dear god.
"May I ask what happened yesterday? You scared the living shit out of Phil as my friend came back carrying you while you were passed out." she proceeded to ask in a normal- interested voice. Mal only rolls his eyes- leaning back on his chair, glaring at her intense, clearly annoyed- while Phil shakes his head a bit. I causally blink at her, and slightly turn my head to my 'Mate'. Looks like he didn't 'tell' them what happened? ...well at least I don't need to be embarrassed about what happened, since they don't know a thing.
"Oh- I simply fell asleep- Sorry for shocking you." I lie. My 'Mate' nods, supporting my lie. Phew. Mal narrows his eyes and Phil doesn't even hear me fully. I start sweating, what are they expecting from me? I'm worried about Phil still. The woman laughs it off.
...
'Wait?'
"What?"
*'She **laughs** it off?'*
"Since when is she on my side- " my thoughts get interrupted as she gives me a hard glare, knowledge lying in her eyes, and I freeze up for a moment.

She... does know... and she knows that I know she knows.
Oh no. I feel like that is bad thing? But has she not encouraged me to spend time with him? What's the deal with her?! I don't get it.

"**Alright, alright- I get it. It happens. Be more careful next time.**

Right?" she brushes it off and pats my 'Mate's shoulder- leaving me uncomfortable. My 'Mate' tilts his head and shrugs at her responds. I sigh, the woman is weird. To hopefully break the growing awkwardness, I giggle a bit. Mal also sighs and Phil FINALLY decides to focus on food again. He eats! Yes! A good sign!
We keep eating and drinking at breakfast in a weird atmosphere. Then, at one point, I hear a phone vibrate and I pause for a moment, looking around to locate the sound. In the end, I'm looking at Malaysia. The others are giving him a side-eye as well. Mal blinks a few times, then takes out his phone to look. Phil gives him a quiet glare, yet doesn't say anything. He doesn't like the use of phones at the table. I personally think It's annoying of him to do so, but right now I'm just glad he just 'woke up' and is behaving more normal again.
'Thank you, Allah.'
"Indeed."
Now everyone is silently and motionlessly staring at Malay, who is hastily typing away at his phone, seemingly embarrassed. He looks at it for a quiet moment, then smiles.
Philippines sighs, clearly tired and annoyed.

"...So?" Phil actively breaks the silence. Malay looks up to him for the responds.
"I got- I mean- **we** got invited to a party. The dude and you, woman, can come too-" he says, grinning. He seems excited. A party?
'Sounds intriguing. Not sure if I like it. Alcohol makes people... violent.'
"Yeah... I know"
'We... shouldn't.'
"Don't say that just yet. Times have changed and people did as well."
'Not sure.'
"That's okay."
The woman seems skeptical at Malaysia's proposal.
"**Stop. Hold up. I know I'm here for like a little longer than week, he has been here for a little over two, almost three.**" she points at herself and then at my friend, leaning back in her chair.
"**-but since when do the others, that haven't met or really seen us, you know, invite exactly us to parties? Seems odd.**" she questions, rightfully. Okay so, Lux knows, Ame knows, Japan, Poland, Singapore, Russia... us... but... I clear my throat and look at

the ceiling.
Me, Malay and Phil start sweating a little. Yeah, ACTUALLY we started flexing on the others with the fact that we got people from outside, which as said, is in fact really rare. We DID make them promise to not tell the internet though. And so far, no one got here.
The woman scans over us, seeing the situation, sighing.
"**Never mind, I don't even want to know...**" she adds to the previous sentence, leaning back in her chair further. The round exhaled. I start smiling again. Time to make that conversation work!

"That's really cool to invite us! Who's party is it?" I ask. Mal looks me dead in the eyes, amusement laying deep inside.
"Americas-" he then answers. I roll my eyes. Of course.
"Of course it's the American..." Phil comments, unmotivated.
"It'll be fun!" I say.
'No it won't.'
"Calm, it's just another social event."
'...'
"Alright." my friend sighs.
"**Mm... Sounds fun, yeah, sure I'm coming.**" the woman says, seeming actually a bit excited, but I'd take that with a grain of salt. That's nice, despite she just questioned how the wider range of countries know of her existence. Then we all look to our 'Mate'. He seems unsure about the whole situation. Please say yes- Please say yes- Or just nod- PLEASE-
"Come on- it's gonna be fun-" Malay says to him, they look each other. The man seems critical, but soon gives up and sighs, nodding. We all cheer immediately, making him definitely visibly surprised. He raises his hand, and then put it down again, not only speech- but also sign-less I guess. Pff- Then he shook his head, and all of us burst out in laugher. Oh, this day will go great for sure-

For sure...

Extra Chapter

"Come on, Neth!"
"I don't want to."
"Please! You need to go outside!" *Belgium makes puppy eyes and I sigh annoyed, turning my head away.*
"You know I don't like being around others..."
"But!"
"Let him be, Belgium, you know why." *my brother Luxembourg suddenly stands in the door frame, coming to my aid.*
"Aw man!"
"You can go with the others, we aren't stopping you." I mumble. My sister turns, not satisfied.
"You're pale! You need some sun!"
"Belgium!" *Lux hisses, shutting her. Immediately afterwards, his gaze turns soft, and he takes off his glasses for a moment. He does it when he tries to be serious.*
"I'll take him somewhere without people."
"I... okay. That's fine." *she seems a little sad and I almost feel bad. Belgie just wants the best for me, yet sometimes she struggles to understand the impact her actions have. It's the bullying that caused me to lock myself inside, after all. Luxembourg puts his glasses on again.*

"You go, we go and we'll meet this evening." *the county states and Belgium nods. She then, suddenly hugs me.*
"Sorry Neth! I'll have fun for you too." *she says in the loveliest voice ever and I smile a bit, caressing through her hair:*
"Thank, Belgie." I mumble. She then lets me go, grabs her bag and runs to the front door, looking back, waving at me and my brother.
"Bye!!" *she laughs and runs out the door. I sigh. She's such a sweet girl, I'm glad the others like her. Me and Lux stand in my door a little longer in silence.*
"We should go too."
"Do we... have to?"
"Yes."
"But- "

"Come on Neth, Belgium is right."
"Fine..."

Around half an hour later, me and Luxembourg walk along the beach. Waves wash over my feet with cool water, the sky in all sorts of oranges. Seagulls scream in the distance. I breath deep, inhaling the fresh air. This is... rather calming, indeed. While taking steps on the wet sand I look out the ocean. Somewhere... is my land out there. Somewhere. I exhale and look up ahead. In the distance towers the fence. It's large, grey and very protected. Drones swarm around the fence. We shouldn't go further near it, just in case. So, I stop walking. Lux stops as well. Looking at him, he seems relieved.
"It is good to be here, right?"
"Yeah... I love the sea."
"I know."
"Perhaps I should be grateful that you dragged me out here."
"Pff, always."

We find a nice spot to settle down eventually, away from the other countries. I lay down a towel on the white, fine sand and sit on it, not intending to go swimming. I almost drowned once, and the experience has me scared. I know how to swim, but still.
"Aren't you coming inside?"
"Ne. Have fun, I'll watch."
"Okay then."
"Don't swim too far off."
"Roger that." *my brother laughs and makes his way into the water. I sigh softly. Perhaps this really was a good idea. I soon lay on my back and close my eyes, enjoying the remaining warmth of the sun. I'm not sure how much time I've had in peace until voices started showing up again.*
...Others, oh no. Glaring to the side, I witness the USA, Laos, Australia and... Indonesia approaching. I feel my stomach turning. What do they want? Why are they here now? I turn my glare back to the sea, where Luxembourg is swimming, trying to ignore the problem. It's just like the ostrich effect. I bite my tongue as they've shuffled close enough to confront me.

"Well, well, well. Look, who it is." *America speaks out, rather mockingly. In a bad way, though. My insides cringe up more and I*

simply exhale.
"Hello? I'm talking to you, dipshit!"
"Leave me alone, Ame."
"Come on now, don't you want to have some fun with us?" *Laos asks, sounding soft. Now, that is unusual, does he mean it? I carefully turn my head to the side to look at them, just to be greeted with a kick of sand to the face. The sand straight up goes into my eyes and I close them, trying to wipe the mini stones out immediately. I knew it. And I was foolish enough to have hope-*
"What's wrong, Neth? Can't deal with a little beach?" *Australia, who is responsible for the sand in my eyes laughs dirtily, leaving me with a groan.*
"Stop it." I sigh, almost pleading. I just wanted a quiet evening, but now I'm being bullied again.
"But you didn't stop either, eh? Serves you right."
"Stop blaming me..."
"But it's fun seeing YOU suffer for once." *Indonesia cackles, throwing more sand at me. I decide to not invest energy in fighting back, it's not like I have it anyways. It'd only fuel the fire even more anyways, so it's better to do nothing. I suppose my lack of reaction makes them more annoyed though.*
"God, you are so lifeless. Like a doll!" *America scoffs and it hits very hard in my soul, as it is sort of the truth. I've been a doll for the main part of my life, doing everything my father told me to while not regarding mine or the feelings and consequences for others...*
"Now that is pathetic."
"Quite depressing."

They keep on raddling me down over various things. Soon though, very soon, my brother steps out the water. He has a distressed look on his face, clearly, he's bothered too that those four are here. And then he steps in, forcing the others onto a little bit of more distance.
"What the hell are you doing?!"
"Oh, nothing, really!"
"I can see that! Leave him alone!"
"Oh come on, Lux, it's fun! Wouldn't you like to join too?" *America baits Lux in with a cheerful smile, but my brother's expression stays cold.*
"You disgust me, all four of you. That you keep Netherlands from what he's done."

"But he- "
"YOU were partly cause for the Vietnam- and Korea war, remember?" *he growls, pointing fingers. Ame swallows and Australia gasps quietly.*
"And what about the civil wars? And the nuclear bomb testing?"
"Lux- "
"I am not saying we shouldn't ignore what happened to all of us, I just think you act VERY unfair towards my brother!" *Luxembourg ends and I look at him in awe. He did really just defend me, in front of four other people. He... really is the best brother I've ever had and could have asked for.*
"That's bullshit!" *Indo reintroduces himself in the conversation.*
"You're just trying to re-advert everyone's eyes from the true problem!" Laos adds.
"What?!"

Suddenly, Australia and America gang up on the way smaller person that is Luxembourg, as the Asian countries stand back, fueling the fire. My insides clench. I glare at the situation. They'll hurt him... and I'm the reason. What?! No! That isn't fair!
In an instinct I get up and separate my brother from the bullies. Everyone seems surprised, Lux relieved. Ame, Aussie and I glare at each other, yet Aussie already takes a step back, seemingly loosing confidence. After all, I am this 'terrible', I guess he is intimidated. The American though stands strongly in front of me. Ame is always making himself seem strong and great as a person, but in reality, he is quite average. I'm average too, yet I have the advantage of being almost 2 meters tall, which gives me the upper hand. Ame scoffs.
"Oh? Now you're acting all tough or what?" *I narrow my eyes at him. "I can tolerate what you all do to me, but it stops there. If you touch any of my siblings in context of me, perhaps I'll become my old self again." I say quietly, and luckily my bluff works. I really don't want to return to my emotionally cold and angry past self, but I am drawing the line at my siblings.*
"Do you understand?"

Ame nods. I glare over the others. They nod too, except Indo. He glares at me with a look full of hatred, also slightly intimidated, yet he remains silent. I glare back with pained eyes. Everyone is just so... childish. Without another word the four leave again and I breath.

"Thankyou so much, Neth. I thought I was done for it." *Lux relaxes too, needing tosit down for a moment.*
"No, no. Thank you for standing up to them. You... didn't have to."
"What do you mean I didn't have to?! Of course, I had to! I care about youvery much!" *he pouts and I widen my eyes. He looks at them and rolls hisown.*
"Me and Belgie do it all the time! We are a little most outcast than theothers, but it's shiet what sort of crap they talk about you! They aren't anybetter!" *he rants, obliviously frustrated. The last sentence takes my mindback to none other than Germany for a second. If caring much about someonemeans defending them, then is Germany... I shake my head, as suddenly a new worryfills me with anxiety. I shoot up, spin around and take fast breaths.*
"What's wrong?!"
"Belgium!"
"What?!"
"They're going back to the others! What if they let their frustration out onher!"
"Huh? You think they'd do that?!" *Lux asked, surprised and even a littleshocked. I pause in my hot headedness for a moment.*
"I... can imagine that. And if it is just to spite me... I did just threaten them."
"I'm... not sure."
"Lux."
"I know you are paranoid. I'll call her, okay?"
"Please do."

16| Party Disaster

Netherlands's POV

The day basically flew by and now it's 8pm already. Phil behaves a little weird, I guess he is just under the weather today. Hopefully he'll be okay. I sigh deeply, drawing. I love drawing, I've been doing it my entire life. Edvard Munch was a big inspiration to me as a child, I love his motives and the simple names of his work. Yet right now I'm just sketching with coal. During the travels of the past decades, I accumulated multiple sketchbooks. Sadly, they were scattered during the incident. Perhaps I'll search for them when I'm done here. With her. A fun project I believe. I really liked the books too, so getting them back would be a massive plus. I finish a doodle as steps from the steps are heard. Malay laughs and Indo giggles too.
"Let's go already! The party won't wait for us!"
"Hell yeah!" *both laugh and I watch Philippines walking in the living room.*
"Hey... you coming?" *he asks and I take a quick look around, making sure that Indo and Malay are out the door again.*
"Are you really okay?"
"I... I am."
"I don't believe you." I say, going as far to take one of his hands. Now Phil seems rather bothered, adverting his eyes.
"Phil." I whisper. Phil swallows heavily and looks at me, opening his mouth.
"We- "
"Ayo, you two! Don't keep us all waiting!" *a female voice interrupts and watches from the front door. I notice Phil slightly frowning, looking away again. I switch glares between him and her. Suddenly, and unwell feeling makes itself wide in my stomach. Did... she do something? No way, right? I bite my tongue and force myself to get up. I grab Phil and drag him to the door, grinning confidentially at her. She can't know that I know, or it might get worse for my friend.*
"We're coming!"
"Good. What very you two doing?" *she asks and in return I show*

my black fingers. They are black from the coal. Phil notices immediately and nods.
"He uh, showed me his coal sketches."
"**...**"
"T-They're very good!"
"Awesome. Now let's go, or else Malay and Indo might implode or something."
"Okay." *Phil sighs and I exhale too as she turns, more relaxed than before. My and the Asian country trade knowing glares for a moment and afterwards we follow the others.*

Wow. Okay. Now, we five are on our way to Ames party. I still don't quite know how to feel about all of this: Countries over countries that used to bully me, loud music, alcohol. I really think I shouldn't do that. I mentally shake my head, trying to shake my worries off. Oh well, as long as the others have fun, I'm satisfied, I guess. I'll just, stand in a corner. Like before.
It has been a while since I and her went to a party. Last time it escalated in murder. Anyways. After some more walking in the warm evening sun, we arrive at the Americans house. I haven't had a single drop of substance and I already feel like throwing up. It's not like you can't already can tell that a party is going on in there: Light shines through the windows, switching colors and also there is loud music.
.
Yeah, I think I'm gonna hate it in there. Too loud. Too flashy. My friend, who was walking next to me, suddenly pulls my head down. I mean- I am way taller than her so, it is the only way.
"Sorry but no drinking for you. I am serious." she whispers in my ear, utterly strict. I look at her face. Her expression is a mix of seriousness but also chill. Maybe, perhaps I'm reading her wrong.
"I don't want you to get drunk and do shit you will regret- okay? It has happened before and it sucked." *she continues whispering, getting me a little flustered. I have awful behavior when I'm drunk, I've been sober for over 30 years now. Okay, not really, I had a beer here and then, but nothing close to being overdosed. Though, she's right. I don't want anyone else to know that I'm Netherlands until we... I decide the right time. Also, I really don't want to get fucked up today in any way possible. I know what they're like, and how bad it can be when drunk. Some even are quite deprived of their 'needs' since living in isolation and I can't imagine it having gotten better over the time I left.*

So, I nod and she smiles, knowingly.
"Great we can agree on that. And if someone harasses you, don't let them and hit them real good, I'm officially allowing it! *" she chuckles, letting go of my head. Though I believe she is just looking for a little trouble, some drama to stir up. She's always been that way. I sigh. Hopefully this won't happen, I really don't want to draw more attention to myself than needed. While we had the conversation we reached the American's house, Phil already knocks on the door. It's opened by Australia, who greets us with a wide smile and red cheeks. Oh God, already?*

"Hey guys- good to see you!" *he laughs, already stepping aside to let us in. No questions asked. As I and her step him, his eyes wander over us. As soon as the door closes, my anxiety kicks in immediately.*
Oh my- I'm gonna throw up. Here are SO, ***MANY, COUNTRIES****! I naturally move closer to my familiar friend and the wall. Though, the woman seems to enjoy a mass of people for once, extrovertedly dragging me through the mass. Everyone looks at us with various expressions as we are the all talked about strangers, and my heart feels like it stopped beating. But to my incredible luck, she decides to give me the mental support that I need, probably sensing my nervousness, and so the both of us sit down in the corner at the makeshift bar in the kitchen. The bar is run by Ireland. The Irish notices us soon.*
"Oh my, the strangers. Welcome!"
"Sup. Suppose you got anything for our throats?" *my friend answers, adapting to Irelands vocabulary relatively quick and with ease. The bartender laughs, amused. I wonder how much he himself got in his system. Knowing him from the past, there must be whisky in his veins.*
"Why of course! Anything you'd like to have? I need to know how you two made it in here, what a story!"

She orders something non-alcoholic for me and a fat, smokey whisky for herself. Oh damn. I exhale in relief though, because this outer worldly being is not affected by alcohol, she can consume as much as possible. If the neither of us don't get drunk, nothing will go out of control in a place like this. Hopefully. But who am I kidding, this house if full of drunk idiots. Indo, Phil and Malay have vanished into the people long ago, I'll just keep sitting here. I drift into thoughts while drinking my drink, only snapping back into reality as two familiar facades sit down next to us. Again, I feel my stomach turning...

*It's **Germany**, and **Poland**.*
Looking to his side- Germany looks over to us. He seems relatively sober, yet he is shocked. I feel shocked too, but even more as he ignores me and stares at the woman. His face turns pale, as if he's seen a ghost. She notices, throwing a question glare at him, with a warning in her eyes as well. Poland now looks too, focusing on me more, but the most on his... urgh, partner.
"What?"
"Y-You?! H-How are you here?!"
"Huh?"
"Where is *HE*?! What did you do to *HIM*?!" he gets louder.
"Niemcy...?" Poland frowns at his behavior.
"Excuse you?"
"What did you do to my *BEST FRIEND*?!" *Germany seems scared and furious and I almost let my drink fall. What did he say?! Is he... talking about me?! How would he know?! N-No way he's seen what happened, we were alone! She only narrows her eyes.*
"Not sure who you're talking about. We've never met." *she calmly says, looking inside her half empty glass, unbothered. Meanwhile I am having goose bumps so bad. Germany remains uneasy.*
"Really? You claimed to have known him. I've seen you!"
"No you have not."
"I am certain! What did you do!"
"Why do you care?!" *she hisses, showing first signs of being annoyed/ aggressive. Germany takes notice of that, he is smart man, after all. I... I didn't know he cared; I didn't think he did anymore... after what happened.*
"I- He was like a brother for me!"
"Surely you treated him like one- "
"YOU- "
"Niemcy*!" Poland bolts Germany from going against her as she watches with cold eyes. I watch them, my emotions all over the place. He is aggressive, or is he worried? Does he blame her for my 'death'? Or even himself? It's hard to think about. I just don't know... I feel so lucky that no one else really seems to notice, as the wild party is still going on around us.*
"And who is that?! The cloaked one!"
"What? Am I not allowed to have a close friend? ~" *she chuckles drily, clearly mocking him. Germanys eyes show pain and frustration and I start feeling bad for him. She put salt the freshly opened wound...*

... he was my best friend after all, I know what he was like...

I want to look away, but I just cannot turn my eyes from the German. His eyes meet mine (well, my hidden ones), and he pauses. His face seems more mature and formed with stress. I turn my head away for a moment and I hear him sigh. Immediately my eyes dart back, watching him surely regaining his composure. That was rather fast, I wonder what clicked.
"My apologies. I was very sure that I've seen you before."
"Perhaps in a dream~"
"No way." *he snorts and she gives him her glass. Germany downs it immediately, much to Poland's dismay. I guess it's for the nerves. Poor him. I'd be interested to see what is going on inside his head. Oh well. Perhaps to have a beer would be nice too... but I'm not allowed alcohol today. So not. I sigh and look back to my glass, taking a sip. Meanwhile, the female surprisingly initiates a conversation with the German, who is still skeptical of her. Not sure why she is so social all the sudden, but Germany is reluctant and short with his answers, Poland clinging onto his side. They the three are busy with each other, I tell Ireland with motions to give me another drink. He looks at my friend for a second, then at me, grins and he winks at me. He gives me a refill and I take a sip, suddenly tasting Vodka in the funny looking liquid. So, Ireland IS trying to intoxicate me.*
But perhaps I can have a little... Due to my current headspace, I don't really mind, just not too much. I sometimes feel eyes on me, so I keep my head low as I drink.
It doesn't take long for my bladder to sound the alarm though. Urgh. I look around, searching for the bathroom. I really need to use the restroom. Well, of course it's not in the kitchen. After a short time, I decide to search for it and stand up, slowly making my way to hopefully a close by bathroom, clinging onto the wall, trying not to disturb anyone.

Hugging the wall, I see the dancefloor not so far away. Currently, Thailand and Sweden seemingly having the time of their lives, being cheered on by everyone. I pause for a moment to watch them. I'm not jealous, I really suck at dancing, but... it is nice to see.
"Mate!" *suddenly, a voice calls out to me. Only one person calls me that! I turn my head around to see Indonesia behind me. He smiles widen, clearly enjoying all of this. We are really different... it's sweet though. He is a sweet person. Especially since he's trying to change and be more*

mature. I wave a little. He looks at me.
"Do you want to dance?" *he asks. I feel myself flushing up, mostly out of embarrassment. I shake my head and Indo frowns.*
"Are you sure? Please! It'll be fun!" *he asks-yells very sweet, but I refuse. My bladder is complaining too, so I try to make my way past him. He lets me through, but follows me.*
"Where are you going?" *I don't answer and stumble around, trying to find the bathroom. I eventually do and Indonesia understands. He smiles, waves at me and leaves into the mass of countries again. I inhale, exhale and go inside, locking the door behind me for a quick break.*

The bathroom is surprisingly clean, I was expecting vomit or other smells, yet I guess it's still too early in the night for anything like that. I quickly use the toilet, wash my hands, inhale, not looking in the mirror once. Then I kind of stand there for another minute, mentally preparing myself for the mass of people again. If I could I would stay in here longer, but I really shouldn't block the bathroom any longer. Like that, I step out of the room.
Trying to get back to the makeshift bar, I keep walking along the wall, avoiding eye contact with everyone. The air is CO2 dense and reeks of alcohol. I stay undercover and undetected, hushing in a ducked state at the wall through the room. Well, I really try to, but suddenly there is an arm in my view, causing me to look up and turn my head. What? Who is- My heart stops beating for a few moments as I see who the arm belongs to: Canada. To be specific, a very drunk Canada. His cheeks are tinted in a dark red, his eyes are only half open and he grins drunkenly, clearly horny. I didn't dare to move an inch, frozen. OH GOD I WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THAT. Which, I regret immediately, because (ironically) I get pinned to the wall by him, almost unable to move, and not only because of the shock. And I am the taller one here please! Canada pins my hands above my head, grabbing my chin, looking hungry at me. It's quite uncomfortable, to say the least. I really don't want to be assaulted!
"Oh my~ it's the mysterious stranger! Indo has said a lot about you, sweet thing~" *he chuckles in a dry voice and I flush at the thought of Indo talking positively about me. But I don't want this. Usually, I'd have a real strength to defend myself, it has been so long since a situation like this that my knees feel weak and Canadas grab is rather strong. Does he still chop wood as much?! The American shakes his head.*
"My, My. You're not getting away~ why so tense, you need to

relax~" *he almost breaths on my neck. His body moves closer to mine, which makes me start panicking for very real reasons!*

17| Drama~

I just finished a really great (awkward) conversation with Germany. This man is so interfering! He is a smart man; I can't believe he saw me and Neth all those years ago. What a grave mistake. Luckily, I barely convinced him that it must be his imagination. Surely, he had just slept not enough, as Poland stated. Sure, as long as it fuels the story to my best interests. It's a little annoying that Neth is so persistent to fit in again. Bullshit. They won't accept him, but I feel bad? I can't feel, yet it is weird. Humans are strange. Surely, the Dutch will come to his senses soon and we can burn, or at least leave. I don't like Indo. He's bad influence. I just encouraged him because of Netherlands. It's so dumb! I sigh in frustration and turn back to said man.
"Sorry that I-" I start, stopping as I realized he isn't next to me anymore. Oh. Uhm. I glare around my surroundings for a moment. Ireland notices. I hate everyone being drunk here. Such careless idiots.
"What are ya looking for, friend?"
"MY friend. You know who."
"Ah? He went out into the main room some time ago." **the European answers. I blink, perplex for a moment, then swearing internally. God that is idiotic. Okay, I guess I should pick him up before anything happens. I really don't need him to cry his eyes out again. I'm worrying too much, but I listen to my stomach, as always, stand up, shoving myself through the mass of countries. Right in the way Ireland pointed me too. The sad thing is that I am small in this form- so it's not *that* easy. I'm being pushed around by a lot of people, whom I'd obviously love to curse at. Since I'm on the mission of 'saving' Neth I've cursed so little it's sort of building up. Very soon, I spot the person I'm looking for, seeing a terrible and aggravating sight.**
What?! Why in the ever-loving void is he being pinned to the wall by, uh, is that Canada?! My mood drops in the speed of

light to frustrated and disgusted. It's very visibly that Nether feels uncomfortable, despite the covers, no questions asked. I keep moving closer, already mentally and physically preparing for this event. Nada is awfully close, and I swear to GOD if I find a single mark, I'll commit murder! Netherlands spots me, glaring at me in pure panic and helplessness. I stare back, trying to tell him with my glare to punch the shit out of the man. You see the party is still ongoing and he wouldn't understand a word I say- even if I'm yelling. He tilts his head, Neth wished to be less weak, and now he is strong. He seems to understand, yet still be frozen. I position myself a little more stable, being able to transfer a little energy boost to my ally. The pact allows this to work. I grin in excitement of the drama.

Then, Nether pushes Canada back. Canada seems confused and slow thinking, almost not even stand straight, oh my, he is drunk, most definitely and obliviously. Ew.
I put my hands in my pockets and decide to stay as bystander as long as it doesn't escalate fully, only stepping in if it gets too violent. As much as I want Canada to be beaten and cut up, I can't let Nether kill him.
Not now.
Not here.
Not in this context.
Quite sad.

Yet, he has to be live through the final events here.

As Canada, now more angrily, still drunk, tries to get closer to Nether again, the man himself actually goes in for the punch. Hard. I feel myself smiling proudly, quietly cheering him on. Give him what he deserves!! I just watch with a grin as Netherlands let's his anger and fear out on Nada, pushing him on a fair distance. I think he just needs it, after all the stress. I told him boxing is stress releasing. As the American helps out is pain/surprised/need for help, the people around us stop dancing, watching both of them fight. They are mumbling and yelling, both worried and excited. It's chill to be a bystander for a while, but I feel my stomach and mood drop as the music suddenly stops. Oh shit. This is not good. I hoped that Neth

could have beaten Nada without much notice, but I guess it's too late now. Now he definitely to all the attention, which was tried to be avoided.

Nether backs up into the wall from Canada, who has been beaten up. Haha, sucks to be him~ It weren't many punches, but strong ones! Surprisingly, he is still standing- and he is angry now. Neth meanwhile is on a roller-coaster of emotions. He is clenching his teeth and fists, radiating an almost dangerous aura. Close to switching, I see. Comes near bloodlust. I love this. I love it when he switches and is aggressive and destructive. He has destroyed so much this way and I enjoy seeing all burn. And don't get me started on fighting him when he is like that! I day dream for a moment and exhale, bringing myself back into the sad reality.
Well- not going to let it happen- yet. It's quite sad, I know. But it'll be fun to stop him, dramatic even! I'm so here for the drama~

As I look at Nethers again, his eyes glowing bright white, even though his face lies in the shadows of his hood. It happens when he uses magic. To be honest it looks awesome just to see glowing eyes from the dark. The others must be SOO scared it's so amusing~

Netherlands's POV

I stare at Canada, who is standing a few meters away from me, breathing heavily. My entire body is shaking in a defense mechanism, forcing me to take deeps breaths as well. A sudden energy push from her is trying to bring out my murderous side... my past self. I clench onto my consciousness with pure fear, I really don't want to pass out and let him take over. I look over to her for help, yet she just smiles and I silently curse at her. The energy makes my hands burns, my fingers flinching in anticipation to use the energy. No.
No.
NO!
In retaliation I just punch the wall behind me, hard, not even feeling the pain. Most bystanders flinch at the sudden move. The additional punching is releasing energy and some of the tension inside my body, and I'm able to look at Canada again. I did punch him a few times in the

face, he has a nose bleeding. Everyone else is watching in silence. I hate this, I just want to disappear into the background, even the music stopped at some point. Even though Canada is defeated for now, this burning feeling inside of me hadn't enough of this. It wants more. It wants to see him beg for mercy for even thinking he could attempt to touch me. To hurt my pride like this! This feeling inside of me grows stronger each passing heartbeat. I feel the area around my eyes heat up more than before, surely, they are glowing now, or brighter than before. That happens. Now... Now they definitely know I'm different... I close my eyes for a moment, then open them, seeing red. As if my body moves on his own, my right hand forms to a fist once again, it is shaking. My mind keeps screaming at me to hurt him- it wants more blood. Knowing that everyone was watching, I take my steps towards Nada, blank mind in the head. The closer I get to him, the more my walking speed increases, I raise my fist, which feel really hot. Not long and a fire would appear. It'd hit the man of focus with fire, probably leaving marks of third-degree burn... doesn't sound that bad, does it? I impulsively reach other with my left arm, grab him at the collar and-
-then, I punch once again, very hard.

The rest of the countries are just staring at us in silence. The air is really thick. Meanwhile she stands in front of me, and puts a hand on my shoulder. Despite knowing all of this, I'm not sure if she's mad or not. We just stare at each other for a moment. Then she teared me down on my knees, and it gives me a half heart attack. But to my own surprise, and probably everyone's surprise as well, she proceeds in giving me a head pat. I blink a little perplex, watching as Canada, who had sort of grinned in victory until now- changes his expression. I ignore him and relax my shoulders, feeling myself tearing up. I really didn't want to hit her- at least not in that context.
She then turns and curses at Canada, scolding him for forcing himself on other people. The drunk American tries defending himself, yet there is no one to his aid.

18| Watching

Indonesia's POV

I was upstairs with friends when the music had stopped, and when I wanted to check on things going on downstairs, I witnessed what happened as I made my way half way down the stairs. My 'Mate' hit none other than Canada multiple times in the face and, and in between his eyes were GLOWING! AND THEN HE HIT **HER**! If I'm honest it looked really awesome, and I don't feel bad for her at all.
'We do not.'
Yet, I thought he was a simple and sweet guy who barely flings out or actively hurt someone for little reasons. On the other side though, I do refuse to believe that things are as they seem. The woman patting his shoulder, comforting him some claps, soon turns around again, facing the wide mass of countries. Canada is complaining, his words lazy and barely put apart. I bite the inside of my cheek, not surprised that he is drunk. And he must be really out of it, usually Nada is one of the most relaxed people I know! And looking at the woman in question, oh my, she's mad again! Rightfully so, I guess. I don't like it as well that that someone may have threatened a friend... especially him! There are steps behind me, and very soon I notice my two best friends standing with me on the stairs. I switch a look with Malay and Phil. I've seen her annoyed, and I do not need to see her when she is fully aggravated. I advert my eyes for a moment, embarrassed at the 'fight' we both had some time ago. Quite embarrassing.
'Indeed.'
"Hm. I don't hear you quite as often anymore."
'Well, you aren't as much of a dick anymore.'
"Oh." I shake my head to regain focus, watching the drama downstairs unfold. The human puts their feet apart to stand stronger and more menacingly in frot of Nada, who is sort of kneeing on the ground. Ukraine is with him, tending to the drunks' injuries. She then dramatically closes her eyes and sighs loudly, getting everyone's attention again.

"Canada, that was your name, right?"
"So what?"
"For the love of God, shut up! We both know it's your fault this happened!" she hisses slowly and loudly, making sure everyone could hear her, staring at the North American country. At this point I didn't know if I should be more surprised, shocked or relieved. Nada's eyes widen. Ironic.
"Wha-" he begins, but is cut off by her.
"You were the one harassing HIM, and now you are blaming him for self-defense!" she says, pronouncing 'him', 'blaming' and 'self-defense' extra loudly.
"But you need to admit that your '*friend*' carried it too far- he didn't have to punch him THIS much!" Ukraine suddenly argues back, her voice softer than the others. A grave mistake, and I do not share her opinion at all! The opposing woman looks at her for a moment, compensating with herself, continuing to glare at Ukraine and then smiling blankly, almost seeming sad. And creepy- The creepiness remains a big factor.

"**I don't really understand how he doesn't deserve it**."
"He's clearly not in the right mind!"
"**It's still his responsibility to not get to this state."**
"Still! He overdid it!" Ukraine keeps defending her friend. Murmur gets loud beneath the bystanders, but we three on the stairs stay quiet, only throwing glares at each other. Everything that needs to be said is said that way. The human continues.
"Perhaps it seems like it in your eyes, yet I still do not agree. There is another given factor as well that lead to this outcome." her glare turns an ice-cold temperature once more and her head turns to the cloaked person, patiently sitting on the floor, head down.
"So? Let's hear it." United Kingdom asks calmly, sitting incredibly professional in an armchair.
Huh? Since when is he here? How? Why is this old man even here? Who let him in? Isn't he too old for a party like that?
"Well." another dramatic pause I feel my heart drop and the tension rising in the room. She seems to enjoy the attention she is receiving and she IS making things overly dramatic, perhaps this is even entertaining to her, but 'WELL'?'
"'WELL,' WHAT?"

'SHE NEEDS TO STOP PAUSING LIKE THIS!'
"JUST TELL ME WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIM I WON'T JUDGE." me and my mind yell at her and I firmly grab onto the railing, digging my fingers into the wood, hot and sweaty.
"He does have severe anxiety and perhaps another undiagnosed mental disorder, which causes him to lose it sometimes, when pushed around like this." she openly mocks the entire situation, seemingly not taking any of us serious.
"I mean, no one would like to be pushed around, right? You would have punched too, right? Or would you have let yourself used like a doll?!- "
"Stop!" Ukraine calls out. My 'Mate's friend chuckles drily.
"Weak. I don't have any further business with either of you." she scoffs and shakes her head.
"Turn the music on again! This situation is over, go back to partying or whatever!" she waves her arm around, grabs my man and leaves the room, mumbling in a foreign language. I bet it's curses. She always does that. The rest of the countries remain unsure, awkward even, but despite the weird atmosphere, soon the music is back on again and most people go back to partying. Calmer than before, but still like a normal party. Ukraine helps Canada into bathroom. I hope he is alright, but I never thought he'd do something like that. I look over to the room that my 'Mate' and the woman left into. Poor him. As soon we get out of here, I will cheer him up! I slightly smile at the thought of it. Wait- no. This isn't the right moment to smile... I guess.

We go upstairs again but we three can't really focus on the fun anymore.
"I feel like we should go to them." I sigh.
"Huh?"
"Check up on how he's doing."
"I mean, sure." Malay shrugs and Phil exhales.
"You love sick bastard. Alright, let's go downstairs." Phil takes the initiative first and leaves the room to the way downstairs. Me and Mal trail along behind him, shoving ourselves through the others until we reach the room the lastly were seen to have disappeared into. Phil suddenly stops at the door frame, causing first me, then Mal to bump into the one in front of the other. I stop myself from saying anything as I see why Phil had stopped. Currently, Canada

and Ukraine are confronting them again. This time, Nada can stand on his own again. Despite the loud music, I try my hardest to listen in. I don't quite understand Canadas mumbling, but my 'Mate' tilts his head, rubbing the back of his neck. Nada seems a little confused at the gesture. Suddenly, the smaller woman peeks out from behind the tall one's back.
"**He's trying to say sorry.**" she translates his gesture. NK tilts his head too.
"Uhm. No... it's my fault- I'm the one who is supposed to be sorry." he looks to the ground. I am very surprised at how sober Nada already sounds. It hasn't been that long(?). Impressive. My 'Mate' starts smiling gently, he still seems apologetic as well, then he pats Canadas shoulder as a pact of peace. I'm very jealous-.
"Thank you..." the American says. Ukraine sighs and her friend starts cheering a little. I exhale as well, relieved. This turned out for the good, at least in this situation. I make a note for myself to talk with my 'Mate' about his mental disorder later, if he is willing to open up about it. Perhaps I should get him to see professional help. Sure, it's not a comfortable topic. but I want to know more about it, so I can help if it happens again. Or get him the help he needs. I just want him to feel okay...

Suddenly, the woman spots us in the door and I feel Phil freezing up. She then proceeds to say something which I don't quite understand to Ukraine and Canada, shoving them out the room through another exit. Afterwards, she turns her attention to us.
"**Malay! Phil! Indo!**" she yells and in retaliation we I take the lead on approaching her. Mal and Phil follow behind me, now we are quite close to her and her friend.
"Yes?" Phil asks before I even think about speaking.
"We would want to leave now; he needs a break and it'll rain soon."
"Oh! Understandable." I hum in response. Seeing no further progression in the conversation, her expression falls into a slightly annoyed one.
"...I need the keys-" we get told with a straight face; she is rubbing the back of her head. Phil hastily reaches into his pockets.
"Right- sure, but let us in when we get back." he then answers, handing her our house keys. The woman takes them and nods approvingly.

"Right- I'll stay awake until 1am- if you're not back until then, you will stay outside for the night." she states, ironic-dead-seriously, turning away, to the tall man. With one hand she pushes him in the direction of the front door
"See you, have fun." with those words, she walked off. We say our goodbyes to her and look at each other. And then they both are gone. What an evening... my emotions are all over the place.
I'm so curious! I need to know more about this man and his abilities!
He is so mysterious.
'Intriguing.'
"Handsome."
'Very.'

I get ripped from my day dreams as suddenly, Malay grabs our arms and drags us from the spot in the next corner. This one time I didn't really mind it, except for the part I didn't get to finish my thoughts. The, finally, the long-awaited discussing between us three started.
"Well, that was something." Mal just, sighs.
"Who would have known that his eyes can glow. Is he really human?" he then says. Phil seems to be in a state of no surprise, which is weird.
"Yes."
"How'd you know?"
"Uh... gut feeling." he presses out and it becomes clear to me that he is not telling us the truth. Does Phil actually know something about my 'Mate' that I don't?!
"Alright? Do you believe it'll happen again?" Malaysia, clearly also knowing what's up, questions Philippines, who is increasingly getting more awkward. The man puts his hands on his hips.
"It's possible, I think. If it's really the mental health there might not be a lot we can do, except for keeping the atmosphere calm. Would be nice to know more about the entire situation-"
"My thoughts!" Malay throws his hands in the air.
"I'll ask!" I interrupt them, making both look at me. It was my plan to know more about it anyways so, I am helping. And I don't need to tell them anything that would make him uncomfortable. In reaction, both start smirking at me because of the fact that I like him and I feel blood rushing into my cheeks. Wait, aw shit.
'This is your own fault.'

"What a great idea!" Mal laughs and Phil smiles unsure, a little afraid. What? Does he not think I can handle this situation myself? What a fool!
"Why are you two like this?" I ask, being annoyed. Both giggle a little.
"Sorry-" Mal cheekily put his tongue out his mouth and Phil shakes his head.
"You are growing up so fast." I simply roll my eyes. We decide to not run after them immediately, as it would seem WAY to awkward, so we slowly split up and each do our own thing for a while.

From then on, I try to have some fun on the rest of the party again. A lot of countries try to make small talk with me (Again, I am just that popular). I try to distract myself from constant worry about my 'Mate's mental health, so I actively engage with the others, but it doesn't really work.
Yeah... I'm worried about him. Mentally exhausted myself I eventually get my chance to back out the conversation and I do, sneaking my way to the bar. There, I sit down where he previously sat. The thought is comforting in some way. I compensate for a moment, then I order some alcohol at the bar. I just need something to drink. I think about the future, what my 'Mates' face could look like. Surely, he is handsome, even if perhaps his face is scared. There is no way he cannot be less handsome than he already is. And since the alcohol in my blood is making me less tense, my thought wanders over many different topics. In the end though, they are starting somehow drifting towards Netherlands. I groan annoyed and put my hand on my face.
No- not gonna let this happen. Not him.
'Why not?'
"I don't know. I guess I still haven't fully come to terms with it still."
'Still. After all this time?'
"I guess I remain hesitant."
'Does that mean, if he was here in person, apologizing again, we would accept it?'
"I guess I could try. Maybe." I look into the bottom of my glass, lost in my mind. It's hard. It's still difficult. I guess I would have to pushed myself really over the edge to have been able to give him another chance.
"It's over anyways, so I shouldn't stress myself with it so much.

'I'm not sure if that is the right approach.'
"Not now, please. We have other things to worry about."
'...'

I drink another shot and slam the glass on the table, not wanting to think about him. It has been a while since I've intoxicated myself. Ireland, who runs the bar, looks at me with wide eyes. Then he tilted his head.
"Rough times?" he asks. I nod.
"What's going on, if I may wonder."
"I keep thinking about someone... and I don't want it. It's difficult and hard." I explain to him, running my finger in repeated circles on the edge of my glass. He proceeds to pat my shoulder, hoping to give me some ease.
"Who is it?" Ireland questions with thick Irish accent, curious.
"Netherlands." I answer drily and sigh. The Irish raises his eyebrows in surprise.
"Yikes- You want another drink?" Ireland asks. I look at him.
"Yeah, sure. I don't want to get too drunk though, would like to be able to walk home afterwards." I say, now the European nods.
"Okay, I got something good for you. It's not too strong either."
"What in the world do you already not put in the 'not strong' section despite pure vodka, gin and whisky?" I mockingly roll my eyes and the other man laughs.
"Fair enough. Fair enough!"

After some time of talking with Ireland and drinking some of my sorrows away, I decide to finally go home. It's 12:30am anyways. So late already? I stumble around but manage to walk. If I would have drunken more, I'd have to reply on the others to go. I tell Mal that I'm leaving, he responses with an
"Okay!" and
"We'll go later too!", seeming rather busy with whatever he is doing with the others. Now that I have given my notice of departure I leave the house, stepping out the front door. The cold air hits my face, making me realize how much my head hurts from the loud music, yelling and the shots... I carefully step down the stairs of the front porch, trying not to fall, just to stand in rain. A lot of rain. Oof. I rub my head as the cool drops hit my face. I definitely need to get home before I pass out or something. And with that, I start

running through the rain...

Extra Chapter

Walking through the dim streets back to my home, I look though chat messages on my phone. Not that I have many, no one wants to talk with me. I had texted Germany in the early afternoon if he would like to hang out and told him where I'd be, yet he left me on read and never showed up. I should have seen it coming. I bite my tongue and swallow sourly. He has better friends now, a boyfriend even. There is no way in hell he'd want to hang out with loser such as myself. I thought I would be raging, screaming, crying, yet I just feel a little dull, as if I already came to terms of this happening.
I don't hold it against him, though. I can understand that he wants to fit in and not have any trouble with the others. They are so cruel. I stop walking and exhale heavily. I feel a little lighter afterwards and look from my phone down the street. A cold breeze floats by, making empty tree branches rustle with the wind. It's late November. I'm not sure if we'll have snow this year or the coming winter. But I prefer the other, more colorful seasons. They are more exciting to draw. The past weeks I've started drawing a lot more and only going outside when it's dark or I'm alone, Belgium and Luxembourg are so kind to buy me art supplies. I shiver at the cold wind, yet I enjoy the calmness it brings with it.

I start walking again, back home. I was asked by my siblings to stop at Chinas place to pick up some Asian food for dinner today. I reluctantly agreed. China didn't say anything, but served me the food anyways. In my right hand dangles a bag with four steaming hot noodle boxes. For Belgium, Lux, Me and Father. I'll just take my box and head upstairs. Father doesn't want to see me. Never. I am the disappointment.

Turning the keys in the lock of my own home, I step inside, a nice warmth engulfing me. My muscles, tense from the cold, relax. I put the boxes down for a moment and pull the jacket off my body and the boots away as well.
Scarf stays on, of course.
I carefully walk down the hallway, trying to stay quiet, as suddenly Lux races around the corner. I get startled pretty badly, yet don't throw the

food anywhere or such.
"You're back!"
"Lux! Don't scare me like that!" I sort of whisper yell in a low voice. My brother chuckles for a moment, then sighs, his gaze wandering to the floor, then around the corner to the living room.
"Dad passed out from alcohol 15 minutes ago. He'll sleep like a rock until tomorrow. Don't worry."
"Right." I exhale as well, and we both reflect silently on what our family has become. In the past; strong, happy and understanding. Now; Father is a raging alcoholic; everybody hates me and Belgie and Lux are being dragged through the mud as well. They all would do better without me. Quite depressing. I snap out of it first.
"I uh, bought the food from China. It costed more than the money you gave me."
"Oh! I must have misheard! So Sorry, I'll pay you back."
"No need, money is practically worthless here. China just likes shiny things, like a magpie."
"..."
"Go get Belgie so we can eat."
"Can you join us for dinner this evening?"
"I mean, I guess. Father isn't going to be there."
"Alright, I'll get her."

We part ways. Lux goes upstairs to go grab our sister as I very carefully tip toe through the living room into the kitchen. If I wasn't scared of my Father, it would have looked quite amusing. Luckily, as Lux suggested, the old man is deeply asleep and far from the real world, so I get into the kitchen, distribute the boxes around the table, add chop sticks and sit down, waiting patiently. Because of Dutch I don't get to eat with them often anymore, so I really enjoy the experience.

Soon, Luxembourg and Belgium join me. Belgie smiles happily as our eyes meet.
"Good evening, brother!"
"Hey Belgie."
"Good to see you!"
"You too."
"It's nice that you join for dinner!"
"I guess..."
"Don't be so negative! I know you are happy as well!" *she smiles,*

causing me to smile aa little as well. Luxembourg's gaze softens and they sit down as well. One after the other, the boxes are opened and we eat together. It feels nice to not sit alone in a dim room when consuming food. It's good too. China is a great cook!
Even though no one is speaking, the atmosphere is nice, comfy, cozy. After eating I feel full, warm and content.
"Any plans for the evening?" *Lux asks the round.*
"I'm going to paint some more."
"You want us to get you anything?"
"No, I have everything, thank you."
"Oh! Tell us if you need anything!" *Belgium adds and I feel myself smiling softly, my soul melting away. I really don't deserve siblings like this. I simply nod.*
"And you two?"
"I'll spend the night gaming." *Lux smirks.*
"Just watching some YouTube." *my sister thinks loudly. Very well. I tell them to have fun, stand up and quietly leave the door. Father is snoring loudly and I quickly make my way upstairs.*

Entering my room, I lock the door behind me, breathing deeply. I turn on the lamp on my night stand as I prefer dim light over overly bright light at the end of the day. My room has sort of turned into an atelier. There are multiple easels with canvasses. I enjoy landscape/city landscape and genre art. Though I make most motives up in my head, from memories and wishes. At the wall is a picture of great ships on the sea, a busy city and a calm evening in a park. I enjoy impressionism and expressionism, yet I guess I still hold some realism in my art works. On one of the easels is canvas depicting tulip fields and windmills from home, drawn from the perspective of the canals that are everywhere in the Netherlands and Belgium. I haven't finished it yet, but today I don't feel like continuing on it. I pull a new, empty canvas on another easel, thinking what I want to depict today. My choice falls on a figure, a portrait. Like always, I let my mind take over and start painting, yet I stop, even hesitate as I realize who I'm painting.

...Duitsland. Germany.

Do I really miss him this much? Am I that unaware of it? I lower my shoulder as take a look around the empty room, remembering when he came by frequently and we would draw together, talk or other stuff. I

put the brush and pallet aside and walk to my desk, searing. It doesn't take long to find the drawing Germs had made at my place. He is so talented. At everything he does. So persistent and yet so gentle. I feel that my emotions are getting hold of me, so I throw the papers away. They dance in the air for a moment before sinking to the ground, scattered. I take a moment to gather myself, burying the grief and anger deep within me.

Afterwards, I sit down again, in front of the half-finished portrait of the German man.
My... former best friend.
I don't want to finish it.
I simply can't.

19| Late Night

Indonesia's POV

And now it's thunder storming. In the middle of the way back home, I just kind of gave up on running, knowing that I'll be completely wet either way. So yeah, it wasn't worth my effort wasting energy with running anymore. I simply walked home, yes- through the storm.
And of course, I ended up home being completely wet and soaked, water dripping from my clothes and body. The fabric clinging tightly and heavily on my skin, it feels like a burden to wear. Also, with the wind; I am freezing. It's so cold. I inhale, sneeze and shake my head. I do feel the alcohol in my system, but in fact, I didn't feel that tired anymore. More like the opposite, the cold rain made me more 'awake'. And that at midnight.
'*Amazing.'* I'm having a headache too. Shivering and with a running nose I finally reach the doorstep of my house, slowly making my way up the front stairs. I ring the doorbell and after a short time a familiar, female visage opens the door, looking at me not surprised at all- not emotional at all. It's a little creepy- but extremely normal for her as I learned. We exchange silent looks as if holding a full conversation, then she sighs.
"Sup."
"Hello." I answer. From her expression I expected her to give a rather nasty comment about my appearance, yet she just steps aside to let me inside Phil's house. I proceed to step inside. After the first step she stops me.
"You are not going to wet the entire house so STAY there. You smell like alcohol too." she notices, looking critical at me. Knew it would be coming. The way her voice curls from her throat would have send shivers down my spine, it sounds distorted and disformed, but thanks to the already mentioned alcohol I took it more careless than usually- and wink it off.
"Tell me something I don't know- I drank schnapps from Ireland." I explain, not really wanting to deal with her right now. I want my

warm and comfy bed, thank you. I hope I don't get sick. I feel her getting a little bit annoyed as well.
"**How much?**"
"I don't remember."
"**Everybody says that. At least you're only semi-drunk. It could have been worse I suppose.**" sigh sighs, almost mocking me. It is clear that she doesn't like me AT ALL, but I don't like her neither. At least the feelings are mutual. I open my mouth to respond as she cuts me off immediate, spinning around dramatically.
"**Just take a shower and go to bed, damn it.**" she adds, sighing, walking back to the living room, just leaving me at the still open front door. I just nod, even though she doesn't notice it, looking after her. I mean- she can't tell me what to do- and I don't feel tired- but I don't want to argue with her right now. I hate admitting it but maybe she's right and a hot shower will make me feel more tired. I carefully take off my hat and hoodie, as well as my shoes, tip toing or bare foot inside the house, careful to not soak everything around me.

Like that, I walk upstairs to our bathroom. We have two of them- one upstairs and one downstairs- but we all usually shower upstairs. Downstairs is only a small bathroom. I enter the bathroom, drop my wet clothing, including the pieces I was still wearing on our towel drier, stretch and look in the mirror. I blink at myself and my facade in the dim light and suppress a yawn. Perhaps I'm more tired than I thought.
'I wouldn't mind some rest.'
"Alright, sure." Despite being wet- I really look terrible. Bags under my eyes, I feel my cheeks burning a little and my eyes are a little blood shot. What the hell was in Irelands drinks? I surely couldn't have been a K.O-drink, I managed to walk home and I am conscious. Though, my view does spin a little. The stare and comments from her are actually understandable now. Point for her this time. I slightly chuckle at my own state, grab a towel and walk to the shower. As I reach it, the door suddenly open. In shock I almost immediately cover myself with the towel, flushing up even more. Looks like I forgot to lock the door, silly me. Damn it! I really didn't think of this.
There is silence. I dart my eyes to the now open door. My heart stops for a moment.

My 'Mate' stands there, completely shocked and frozen in place- and surely blushing underneath the shadows. He snaps out, taking a step back, putting his hands over his mouth.
He did not expect that-
I did not expect that.
We just stare at each other with blank silence, red in the face. Any other person would have already closed/slammed the door shut, but not him. Is there more to this? Perhaps... no way. I feel the thoughts in my head almost painfully spinning. To my own surprise I actually stayed calm and didn't panic or anything this time- even though he's seeing me almost naked. Maybe it's because of the alcohol? I mean- I'm not 100% drunk, but still kind of drunk. But he isn't drunk. In this moment, a silly, very childish idea formed in my head. Something that I have only read in novels and bad fanfics/smuts about ships young people make on the internet. It is very silly and a little cringe, yet the alcohol has taken away my barrier to estimate my inhibition. It will be cringe, but fun, perhaps.
I COULD try to make my move on him and maybe flirt, I mean I can sneakily blame it on the alcohol the next day if I mess up completely. I am a drunk genius. I inhale internally. Here goes nothing.

"Like what you see? ~ " I say flirty, winking at him, laughing a bit afterwards. I. Regret. **Nothing**. Even though he wears his hood, now I've done it and he's visible blushing, the bluish skin turning purplish with a tint of red. In conclusion, he finally stumbles around and leaves the room as fast as possible, but as a positive surprise he doesn't slam the door shut, but closes it normal, even if a little more forceful. At this point I couldn't help it anymore and start wheezing loudly. I feel sort of sorry for him though, this situation is just too hilarious. Wondering what he was up to. Anyways, I hop in the shower and well- shower, thinking of other ways to mess with my Mate as long as I can blame it on the alcohol. What a sea of opportunities. Another loud thunder is heard, making me flinch a little.
As the goose bumps on my skin relax, I simply exhale. I'm not scared of Thunderstorms, it was just... a little sudden. I exhale deeply. But that storm is now directly above us. It would have been dangerous if I would have been outside now. I swallow and get out the shower, warping myself in my towel, a thought plopping into

my mind.
I could use it as excuse to perhaps cuddle or get comforted by him.
'Oh my. How romantical.'
"Don't sound so sarcastic!"
'This isn't how this works.'
"Yes, it is! I will show you!" And like this, it won't get too awkward, I believe. I grin at the thought. I finish showering after a while, being more comfortable and better looking afterwards- and get out of the shower, changing into new clothes. While upstairs is already dark, downstairs is still light. Right, the woman of my nightmares is down there waiting for the others to come back. But now, to the second part of my plan. Focusing through the alcohol. I need to start acting. Acting scared of thunder. I really hope it works. So, my way leads me to the guestroom and knock at the door.

After a short time, I hear the door unlocking and my 'Mate' appears in the frame. He seems very tired, even suppressing a yawn with his yawn. But what comes through is a raspy sound, deep and sexy. Oh my. I wasn't prepared for that.
I mean, it is late and a lot things happened today so, yes, understandable. He tilts his head, probably meaning to asks what's up and what in the world I would want from him at 12 in the morning. I play with my fingers and look down, lowering my voice. Yes, yes, I'm very great at acting.
"Uhm, I'm sorry for disturbing, but I'm terrified of the storm outside..." I start, conveniently being interrupted by more thunder, proving my point further. He just stood there for a moment or more, deciding, debating. As another thunder rolls in, he snaps out of the trance, proceeding to grab my shoulder, which made me flinch. He follows up and drags me into the guest room, closing the door behind us. It's completely dark inside here- and I mean pitch black. Not soon after I hear the sound of a locking door. My heart drops a little and I suddenly feel unsure if this was a good idea. I swallow heavily, even though he does lock that door every time.
So, what now?
What is he going to do-
I hear him shuffling closer, now probably directly standing in front of me. He is so close that I feel the fabric of his coat against my skin. He must be bowing over me! I feel myself blush at how close he is, my heart beat pounding in my ears and against my chest, the

nervousness and anticipation rising up in my throat. I'm not sure what to expect anymore. His behavior scares me a little. It's unusual for him to behave this way, I guess. He puts a hand on my shoulder, soon after cupping my cheek. I feel stunned as the rough hand caresses my cheek. What is happening?! Why is he suddenly doing that?! Not that I mind, but still!

Is he...?
Are we going to...?
Before my mind could continue making up weird shit, my 'Mate' lets go and quietly walks around the room, turning on the desk light. I narrow my eyes in instinct as the sudden and bright light source appears. Then, writing. I didn't move a single centimeter, watching the tall figure bending over the way to low desk and the way the pen moves in parallel with the sound of it scratching the paper. Afterwards, he straightens up, making a gesture for me to get over to him. Only then my feet started moving, my head getting heavy again. Guess I won't pull an all nightery tonight.
- *Would you mind wearing a blindfold for the night? I don't have anything against your question- but I also really don't want to reveal my face. And I sleep without my coat* - the paper reads. My mind immediately goes to different place. What if he tries anything?! I will be defenseless! My heart rate increases again. The taller man tilts his head, until he realizes the implications as well. He quickly and very embarrassed shakes his hand, denying everything. He seems so honest about it, he's almost panicking. I internally exhale, forcing myself to think rationally.
He wouldn't do anything, that'd be out of character.
He's just a shy and sweet guy, who is willing to help me.
And it was my choice to be here in the first place...
Surely, nothing will go wrong.
I bite my tongue and swallow before making my statement.
"Uhm. Okay, sure. Calm down. I'll trust you that we just leave it at that. I am thankful that you are willing to share your bed with me." I answer, smiling, perhaps a little too formal. Damnit. The man seems relieved. It's very oblivious, which makes it amusing. He quickly turns to write again.
- *Thank you for the trust, Indonesia!* – I smile at the words before continuing to read.
- *But if you wake up earlier than me you **NEED** to promise that you*

won't take it off, that thought is making me really anxious. - the paper makes it sound as if his pleading is frantic.
"Of course. You don't want to show your face and I respect that fully. Thank you for the trust, it must be hard." I say seriously, looking to him.
- *Yeah, for you as well.* – now, my 'Mate' smiles a little too, not only relieved but also excited. So, this is the ultimate test of trust between us. I do not plan on letting him down! I will earn and keep his trust no matter what! And maybe... it might be a perk if something Happens.
COUGH.

Yet, there is one thing I want to see before going blind for the rest of the night.
"Mate?" I ask again, he looks at me, awaiting the question.
"Can I... uhm, see your eyes glowing again? Like at the party? It looks really awesome." I continue, rubbing the back of my neck. He looks at me with a truly unreadable expression and I start getting awkward, so I clear my throat.
"You don't have to if it makes you uncomfortable of course! Haha!" I try saving myself, feeling that it is no use anyways. I hear him sigh, and after a minute he turns around, turning off the light. I turn my attention to him. So, he'll do it?! He turns back to me and shortly afterwards, his eyes start glowing in the bright white shine from a few hours ago. It looks really intimidating and I get goose bumps. Yet, it's also so fascinating. I have the urge to cup his face in my hands, but that is sadly not possible in the moment.
Then an even louder thunder breaks down and his eyes stop glowing, him breaking eye contact. Kind of sad, since it still looked cool that he can do that. Now, that my request has been fulfilled, my 'Mate' walks around the room, eventually handing me a black piece of fabric. A blindfold, to be specific. I take a deep breath and question one last time if I should do this. Do I really trust him? He has lived here for some weeks, but I know so little. A knot forms in my stomach.
No- Indo stop- calm down. Everything will be alright. In case anything goes wrong you'll just scream for help; it'll work out fine! After a last, shaky breath I finally put it on, tying the ends together behind my head. Everything is even more black than before, really, no light goes through that fabric. As the taller man rustles around

me once more, I feel my pulse increasing, getting louder as well. This is actually nerve-wrecking.
I stand in the room, blind, just trying to stay in balance, I'm still semi-drunk, remember? I hear something dropping quietly on the floor, making me flinch. I have goose bumps all over my body and suddenly the room feels way colder than before. Afterwards I hear him stepping towards me. The next thing that happened was me suddenly being picked up in bride style. I yelp in surprise, trying to make myself even smaller while also trying to grab onto something in case there was the danger of falling off. I didn't imagine being folded and picked up like that, yet I let my head fall against something warm, yet uneven. Wait- is this his chest? I mean, like, his bare chest???
He said he doesn't sleep with a coat, yet I assumed he wears something beneath that?! Am I wrong?!
My 'Mate' sleeps shirtless. And I am sleeping at his side tonight. At this point I sure that I am indeed blushing very hard, but I'm sure that my 'Mate' turned off the light, or did he keep them on again? Well, that's the downside on being blind- can't tell if it's light or dark- but I should be fine? I hope so.

My 'Mate' gently puts me down on the bed, and I proceed to snuggle into the covers underneath me- pulling them over me. There is still warmth remaining here. Soon, I feel the mattress next to me going lower, as I feel him lying down next to me. The other male sighs, probably happy to finally continue sleeping. Can't blame him. I wait a little for the situation to clear, the adrenaline rush that I got when putting on this piece of cloth is preventing me from sleep. When I felt that the air was clear, I waiting for more thunder to roll in. It did. Just then, I decide to make incredibly tactical my move and cuddle into his side. His arm wasn't there- I assume he put his hands behind his head, which is tearing the arm up too. He flinches, clearing aware of what is happening, but doesn't do anything else. I mentally exhale at the success. Nice. His body feel comfortable warm- so I simply stay like this, enjoying the feeling of being so close to him with genuine happiness.
It's been a long time since I felt like this.

20| Silent moment

Netherlands's POV

I slip back into consciousness as my nose feels unnaturally warm, to sunshine tickling my nose in the early hours of 7am. I still feel drained from last night, my back and shoulders aching, my head hurting a little, even though I haven't consumed anything. Though I am close to fading into the realm of dreams once more, I also work through yesterday's events AFTER the disaster at America's house.
She told me to rest,
Then when I wanted to use the bathroom I saw Indo n-. I stop my line of thought and sigh. How embarrassing. I still want to sink into the floor and disappear. I wonder if he remembers? Not... Not that he doesn't look good, the moment and scene were just very inappropriate and unacceptable. How rude of me! Yet he flirted back, no that was just the alcohol. I swallow hard and open my eyes, flinching at the brightness of the room.
Hold on, I'm sure I closed the curtains last night- was someone in here?! But I locked the door. My heart stops for a moment as I ponder on the question. It must have been her, there is no other possibility.
I sigh once more, relaxing again. What a night yesterday...
Oh well! A new day, new problems I will be forced run into.
Eventually, I decide to get up, getting hungry. Wanting to sit up, I feel a weight holding me back a little and I stop immediately, even laying back down.

Oh right- I am cuddling with Indonesia. He came into my room yesterday as he was scared of that storm for some reasons, can't remember him like this from the past but oh well. I turn my head to see his head resting on my shoulder, one arms pulled to his chest and the other one spread across my chest.
Suddenly, the realization hits me over the head once again and my face starts burning, my pulse going through the roof.
OH GOD, I'M CUDDLING WITH INDO?! I REMEMBER! I take a deep breath and close my eyes for a moment. At least he's still asleep and

wearing the blindfold I gave him last night. Identity saved once more. My heart rate slowly goes down and I shift to look at him better. He seems comfy and relaxed, even though the position he is in looks uncomfortable as hell. I have never been this close to him... well maybe for the first week when he held my hand as I had woken up. His skin is soft and I don't even see any scars anymore, they must have fully healed over time. Good. With an empty mind and no consideration about the consequences of my actions I lay my hand gently on his cheek. It feels as soft as it looks, yet it feels cooler compared to my hand, yet since inhabiting fire magic I never had to consider loosing any body-warmth, even in a blizzard. I carefully stroke his check a little, not to wake him up or anything. I get a tingly urge in my stomach yet this would be really weird, so I try ignoring it to stroke his hair a little.
I really like him, it seems.
I've seen Indo maturing during the few weeks I've spend here, yet I don't think it's enough to shock him with the reality. I fear that everything that he worked up to muster will simply collapse and therefore he'll go back to the Indonesia I once knew. I bite my tongue and try to force the depressing thoughts away. Just try to enjoy the sweet, little moments until you can't, idiot! So, I simply keep looking at him, yet soon after my intrusive thoughts take over, and I stop moving it. My thoughts part. On one, larger side, I just want to stay like this. On the other side, I just want to see him burn, since he was the catalyst for the abuse I suffered all those years. I shiver and take my hand back, pausing. No, I cannot think that, I deserved it! There is a lot wrong with me, still...
Lost in that thought, I stare at Indo in the end, a little empty, seeking affection and comfort, even.

Indonesia himself, meanwhile, looked like he was really enjoying this entire thing I did before the intrusive thought left me empty. Suddenly, I feel even more weird. Feeling like my lungs were closing up, my stomach twisting and shaking and turning all the other organs with it. I even feel cold, though that should be impossible, and some sort of anxiety shoots up in my head, almost knocking me out, making me at least a little dizzy. I want to throw up, badly. And then, it happens again.
An intense heat ruses through my veins, far above 50 degrees and in an instance, I push the other male away from me, almost falling off the bed myself. Yet I get up myself, considering what to do. This 'Overheating' happens from time to time, especially with imbalance within my judgement. I fully haven't understood it myself, yet she explained it to

me as far as 'the waves of energy responsible for the magic clash due to inner imbalance, which quickly gets out of control'. She even was surprised that it hadn't happened before in the past weeks.
Maybe I should have listened when she suggested to move on...
But the others here, this is my home, is it not?!
The temperature rises to 70 degrees, far more dangerous. Inner overheating is far worse that outer heating for me.
Outer heating...
I rush out onto the balcony, summon fire and engulf myself with the flame. It doesn't harm me, I just hope the energy is enough to pull the heat/energy out my body, like plasmolysis.

I admit, a weird sight it would be for anyone to see; one relaxing in a body of fire, yet very soon I actually feel less light headed and less hot. Warm, but not boiling. I exhale to lean on the veranda. That was close, I wouldn't have liked to explode if my blood had reached 100°C: boiling point. Blood boils at the same temperature as water, considering one is on the ground and not in 19km height, there blood boils at 37°C. Reconsidering the past minute, I scoff at myself. That Indonesia would get me that kind of distraught... It is as if I really am fire and flame for him.
No, that sounds both cringe and cheesy. I need to make more self-convincing decisions, and then stand behind them. Surely, it'd make me more independent and confident too. I look at the sunrise, making this promise to myself. Such outbreaks will just get me attention, I wouldn't want that. I take another moment to calm myself down, soon distinguishing the flames. I stretch and head inside again. No one should see me standing there, especially not in underwear.

Inside the room, first thing I do is grabbing my clothing and putting them on. Makes me feel a lot safer. Pulling the hood over I finally return my attention to Indonesia, who had woken up due to my rather sudden and violent push. He still wears the blindfold, yet he seems a little afraid and confused. I feel bad immediately, deciding firmly to make it up to him in some way.
"...M-Mate? Mate! Are you there?!" *he asks quietly, unsure, irritated and a little hurt even, a really poor call out. I bit my lip, unsure to go near him. Yet, at the same moment I shake my head to remind myself of the promise I literally made two minutes ago. Stop being hesitant! My knees suddenly feel weak as I take profound steps towards the bed.*

Nervous yet determined, I sit down next to him. Feeling the sudden weight on the mattress, the smaller male instantly yet carefully searches for me, clinging onto my arm. I get embarrassed again, reminding myself that the door is (hopefully) still locked.

I proceed in reaching out to him with my free and remaining arm, slowly proceeding to take the blindfold off as best as I can. He holds still, rather patient as I remove the piece of cloth. It warms my heart that he resisted looking at me, it makes him a little more trustworthy. Indo hisses as he was blinded by the sunlight falling through the still open balcony door. I just watch him adjusting to the light. I make a wave to sign him a greeting. He eyes me carefully before deciding to speak himself.
"Good morning too." *he chirps and I can't help but to smile a little. The Asian man suddenly lets go of me and walks to the table, religiously returning with papers and pencil in hand. He hands them to me and sits down in the same position once more. He watches as I write.*
- How did you sleep? -
"Ah, really good, thank for sharing the bed!"
- That is good to hear. -
"And you?"
- Sleep good too, thanks. -
"Uhm... why did you push me all the sudden?" *he rightfully asks and I hesitate for a moment, unsure how to respond.*
- My apologies, I forgot you were there and got startled. -
"Ah..." *he sighs, almost sounding sad. This isn't what I wanted!! I quickly come up with something.*
- I want to make it up to you, as apology! Anything I can do? – I write eagerly, not only to fulfill my decision but also because I want to.
"W-Well, there is something." *Indonesia, suddenly getting shy, says. He avoids my gaze and flushes up, causing my heart to beat faster as well. He inhales.*

"I... actually really like you." *he confesses, calm and collected, though it is easy to tell he is nervous. He then looks to me.*
"I don't know what it is, maybe the mystery around you, how gentle you are and how kind, yet within the short time I really, really wished to be close to you so very often." *he continues to speak, leaving me absolutely stunned. I could have cried on the spot.*
He doesn't mean it-
He doesn't mean it!

HE DOESN'T KNOW WHO I AM!
As I freeze in place, both heart broken and flustered at the same time, Indonesia whips his foot, a little embarrassed.
"I uh, remember everything from last night a-and actually, I'm not scared of storms, more like the opposite. I just wanted an excuse to spend the night with you..." *he goes on and it'd be so sweet except for the fact that he actually hates me. I grab the pencil tightly, desperately trying to figure out what to do next. Play along or not. Both would hurt either of us... yet... I guess rejecting him would hurt me a lot too. Perhaps, I should follow through with me emotions for him.*
Even if they are built on a fake façade.
Even if they are temporary.

Before I can even consider I quickly write.
- I like you too, Indo. -
His face lights up and my stomach sinks.
"Really*?!" he asks to be sure and I nod, biting my tongue. It already kills me with the pure immorality of this entire action, yet I promised myself to stand through with me choice. I can't possibly back out. The others male's face is overjoyed, yet he clears his throat.*
"I'm happy." *he declares, obliviously trying to behave like an adult, though his childly joy shines through. It is adorable.*
"Uhm, for the favor you wanted to give me, may I perhaps kiss you?" *Indo then suddenly blurts out with every composure lost. I almost choke on my saliva, my face continuing to burn with a probably deep red shade, yet I nod shily. To be completely honest, I got NO OUNCE of experience. I keep in place as Indo reaches out, cupping my cheeks with his hands. My pulse increases and I get a little afraid, yet I restrain from pulling away immediately. Instant I put my hands on his waist. Indo takes his time to feel my cheeks and nose gently, his thumbs glide over my lips eventually. Having felt enough, he closes his eyes and pulls my head down to kiss me.*

It's a soft and light kiss, and Indo quickly lets go of me. He smiles brightly from ear to ear and while I remain flustered at my first kiss, he is already out the room, leaving me there, rather dumbfounded.

Philippines's POV

I sit on the edge of my bed, back in my room. I barely slept this

night- and now I'm facing the consequences of my actions by having a big ass headache. I really did drink too much yesterday, but honestly it was totally worth it. Every single drop. Spain, one of my former enemies stayed close for the rest of the evening and we had a long and fulfilled conversation. I think I don't dislike him as much anymore, it's been so many years anyways, yet I ought to be careful, I've seen what he can do. I trail off as I feel my pulse in my head. I sigh and get up, wandering to the bathroom. I desperately need pain killers. Walking into the bathroom I look in the mirror. God, I look awful. I also chuckle at myself before washing my face with cold water and taking a pill of the painkiller. Now, back to my room, I got water there. As I make my way back, entering my room, the air suddenly feels very cold.
The door closes behind me on its own.
"Well, well, well." A familiar voice makes its appearance, freezing my blood in an instance. What does she want now?! I keep standing frozen and profound steps arch closer to me. I eventually feel her ice-cold breath on my neck.
"You seem quite relaxed." the predator calls out as my hands feel very cold.
"M... May I not be r-relaxed in my own home.?" I question, though it sounds more like a whimper. I feel her hand reaching over my shoulder, grabbing my chin. In an instance I'm being turned 180 degrees and almost lifted, leaving my neck totally exposed. Two red eyes dart at me, all eye white gone.
"Wh- "
"Indonesia has been getting on my nerves, KISSING Netherlands, that filthy stunk."
"Eh?!"
"And you know what that means, you offered yourself to me, after all. ~" her voice curls from pure disgust to rage to a terrifyingly sweet voice in the shortest amount of time. I know what that means, more suffering for me. But that is better than seeing Indonesia hurt. I swallow hardly, relaxing my muscles, just waiting for it to be over. I'll need more pain meds afterwards.

The woman pushes me onto the bed and before I could yelp her hand forces itself onto my neck, preventing me from breathing almost fully, making me feel a whole lot dizzier already. Suddenly, there is sharp pain in my arm, yet the lack of air prevents me from

screaming. There, another cut in my muscles. And again. Slicing, even. My skin feels like it's burning, hot, wet and sticky. The woman above me radiates the aura of a maniac, enjoying to see me suffer and how I can't scream for help.
It's part of the deal, after all.
Eventually, finally, she has enough for the time being and releases me. I gasp for air, breathing heavily, my entire body hurting. As sudden as she appeared, the sudden she was gone and I was left on the now bloody bed. I can't possibly explain that to anyone. The tears that were already flowing got more intense as I start crying. Not only because of the pain, but also because of the sorrow. The things I do to keep my family safe...

I force myself despite the pain to get up, to get a better look at myself. The sheets are heavily stained, blood pouring out of various stab wounds, varying in size and depth. I need to clean it. Trying to stand up, I immediately fall back onto the bed, exhausted and overwhelmed. I take deep breaths in hope to magically recover, hot tears streaming down my cheeks. If I don't do anything one of them will find out. Then everything was for nothing. Trembling, I get up again, pulling myself to the door, almost collapsing with every step taken. Almost crashing against the door, I turn the key to lock it, feeling relieved immediately. Looking on the floor, there is blood everywhere. Shit. I make my way to the cabinet, as painful as it was to the door, to take out a first aid kit. Since she started doing this to me, and since Netherlands is here, I keep many of them, one here, to nurse myself. Afterwards I collabs on the bed again, starting to apply pressure bandages to the deeper cuts and normal ones to the lighter. I then clean my skin from the remaining blood, finishing up with warping everything up. Thank God summer is over, this will leave scars for sure.
I shudder, tearing up again at the way how messed up my body looks and how worse it might get. She even threatened to cut whole chunks out if anyone knows about it. But I'm so bad at lying! I shake my head, getting dizzy again, preventing a panic attack. Right, water. I mercilessly grab the water bottle at my bedside and empty it in an instance, swallowing the pill too. I give my system a few minutes and I already feel a little less dizzy. Then, I drag myself to clean the blood and change the sheets, even opening the window, to get the blood stench out the room. I'll wash them later, when the

others are outside. I can't go anywhere in this condition anyways. At last, I pull hoodie and sweatpants over my body, even putting a thin scarf on, not only to tie the look together, but also to hide my neck... it's purple.

I collapse on my fresh bed, passing out almost instantly again.
Yet I soon am forced to awake, as my dry throat and banging on the still locked door don't allow me to have peace.
"What?" I sigh as loudly as I can. Malaysia's voice appears behind the door.
"Phil! Phil! Phil! Open the door!!" he exclaims, obliviously excited. I value if I should do anything or ignore him, yet decide to hear him out. As I open the door, his eyes widen.
"Phil?! Are you okay??"
"Still feeling yesterday in my bones, that's all." I excuse my terrible façade. Malay frowns, seemingly worried.
"Sorry for interrupting then."
"Now we're here. Why did you acquire my attention so much?"
"Firstly, I cooperation decided to sponsor me!!"
"Woah, awesome!" I try my very hardest to be happy, yet I just feel so exhausted. Malay continues to ramble.
"And yesterday was fire, sad that you overdid yourself!"
"Mhm, guess I forgot where my limits are..." I chuckle lowly.
"You'll feel better tomorrow I promise!"
"I believe you."
"Yay! Well, talking about yesterday, the conflict between our 'Mate' and Canada was SO unexpected!" he says loudly while guiding me back to the bed. He closes the window too before sitting down on the edge of the bed. I already close my eyes, yet still pay attention to him, at least at the best of my abilities.
"How did he made his eyes glow?!"
"I don't know." I lie. Of course, I know, but he can't, even if it feels wrong.
"My question is, can he do more stuff like that? It was so cool!"
"Why don't you ask him?"
"Uhm, ehehe... I'm not too close with him, it'd be embarrassing."
"Since when are you embarrassed?"
"Shut up!" he helps, barely resisting the urge to hit me with a pillow. I chuckle drily and Malay sighs.

"Who are those two really? Why are they hiding something from us? Why is one of them pretending to be mute?" the other male suddenly asks and the amused chuckle gets stuck in my throat.
"So many GODDAMN questions... and no answers..." he wails, resting his head in his hands. I sigh, forcing myself to eventually sit up once more, though my hip really doesn't enjoy me doing it. Yet, before I even get to start on some encouraging and comforting words to my frustrated companion, he continues blabbering.
"But 'No answers'? No, I'm not satisfied with 'having no answers'." he spites to no one, his eyes darting around the room rapidly. I watch him eventually stare into nothingness, thinking as hard as he possibly can in his current state of a solution.
"I know you said that I shouldn't force answers out of her and the Dude, but my patience is running thin." Malay looks me straight in the eye and my heats skips a beat. If any of them finds out I am done for. The hair on my neck stands straight. I don't even feel safe in my own home anymore.
I can't even kick them out if I wanted! It's a mess! Yet, Malay and mostly Indo wouldn't agree anyways. In the end I'm the one kicked out and I don't want that. I'm alone in this.
During the thought bubble of depressing thoughts I found myself in Malaysia thinks loudly, probably mostly to himself.
"The human is definitely aggressive to others, and she also loves arguing and seeing the world burn. I think she is rather strong as well. I mean she got punched really hard yesterday and she didn't even flinch a little bit... Makes me feel like she isn't human..." he says, a dangerous undertone laying in his voice, it's almost shaky at the end, even.

"Wait a moment!" my friend suddenly perks up, an idea developing in his head. He turns to me with a wide grin, as I already don't like what sort of idea is going.
"We played truth or dare at the party yesterday, remember? And you HAVE TO answer the truths, just like you HAVE TO do the dares too!" he seems excited, almost like a child ready at a sleepover.
"Meaning that we could force them to answer our questions if they agree to play~ Well- it's rule of the game- so I wouldn't describe it as forcing." He announces and I just blink. The idea is quite childish, there is no way they would agree. Yet I feel so drained that

I can't bring myself to argument against him, as if I was in a trance. "Wonderful! I'm a genius!" Malaysia hypes himself up and quickly gets up, running out my room to tell the others about my idea. I exhale heavy and fall on my bed again, passing out almost immediately.

Later, as I feel a little better, I carefully move down the stairs and join Netherlands on the couch. Indo lays against his shoulder and he talks to Nether, very open and happily as they watch TV. I get a little afraid at their closeness, remembering and feeling what she has done because of it, yet I also feel bad if I'd attempt to break them apart. But... I'm glad he likes Indo too; they look cute together.

After another minute or so, Malaysia and the woman... this demon come in, talking. She seems both annoyed and done, yet a little curious. I shiver as I feel her glare resting on the couch.

"**So, if I understand you right- you want to play truth or dare with all of us?**" she questions skeptically, looking at Mal again. Malay nods, me, Nether and Indo still sitting on the couch behind them. She looks closely at him, then at me with a warning glare. She simply tilted her head afterwards. Oh wow- **great**- she gives ME the fault for this... I start sweating. It is clear that doesn't want to play. She must have noticed Malays motive already: purely strategic- just using the game to press answers out of her, and Neth. Malaysia is desperate for them- Indonesia secretly surely too. This situation is getting more critical. We need to keep about Nether as quiet as possible. I fear the worst and also her to just start to insult Mal for a dumb and childish idea like that, as she heavily sighs, seemingly having traded looks with Netherlands.
"**Okay! Fine! But we split dares and truths-**" she points at Nether, and then at herself.
"**-between each other. He only does mediocre dares he's comfortable, I answer some truths.**" she says coldly, trying to take the pressure of talking off of Nether. I remain there in shock and with widen eyes, I cannot believe she actually agreed. Did that safe me or does it make things worse?! I can't tell anymore. Malay cheered and Indonesia seems interested, as a slight wave of discomfort radiates from Neth. Me and her look at each other for

another moment. She seemed even more desperate for answers. I felt my eyes narrowing, starting to sweat a bit once more. I then closed my eyes, silently praying for the best.

The beginning of the game is actually more harmless than I originally thought, with Malaysia on board, you can always expect the worst. I dared Mal to propose to Indo- they made it stupidly funny by acting overdramatic and totally in character. God, we were laughing so hard, even the woman was a tiny bit amused. At least she isn't an entirely emotional freak, though I don't feel any better around her despite this fact. Malay then dared Nether to make his eyes glow again. Right, it's so fascinating for him, and seemingly also Indo to look at Neth's glowing eyes. Like, I know there is magic behind it and stuff, yet as a realist and man of science, it's a little hard to not warp my head around it too much. Afterwards, it was her turn to ask away. It was inevitable that she asked Indo.
"Indonesia- truth or dare?" she says, looking at him like a hyena ready to plunge into their prey.
"Truth." it came back eventually. She narrows her eyes and stares at him silently for a moment, anticipating, already having him on the hook. There is nothing I can do to safe him now. Her glare wanders from Indonesia to Netherlands and back, I can practically hear the thought lingering in her mind.
"Be completely honest- I dare you- what do you think about him. And why." she says in cold blood, glaring now intensely. She makes it very clear how much she disapproves of their closeness. Indonesia stares back, a little startled even, before answering, getting the whiff of her demeanor immediately. I pray that Indo will be careful with his words.
"U-uh- I mean... he is really nice and carrying, overall really sweet- and also I think he looks really strong and even though he covers his face and always wears his coat he looks really handsome." Indo says, not being able to hold back a sly grin and a cheeky flush, speaking quieter with every word, almost not being understandable at the end, looking at the ground, playing with his fingers, trying to escape her glare. Netherlands looks really flustered as well; he doesn't push it away though. *Oh great, a dead sentence.* The woman was about to say something, yet I decide to cut the conversation short before anything happens. It's for the best, the mood isn't

totally ruined yet. Like that, I clear my throat.

"Hey you, truth or dare." I interrupt, earning me the attention of all.
"Truth-" she almost hisses back, seeming a little pissed that I cut her short. I'll make sure to not be alone for a while, she wouldn't attack me then, right? Though, it did save the mood (and Indo), but I feel like I regret this already.
"What's up with the scar on your face? - I mean the one running right through your right eye-" I continue to asks, to diverse further from the critical topic that is Netherlands's and Indonesia's relationship. I watch her definitely pausing for a moment, looking at me with a *'how-dare-you'* and I feel my heart beating really hard out of nervousness.
"It was an accident that happened years ago." she calmly answers after a moment of silence. I don't really buy it. Knowing what she can do, I don't think that it must have been an accident... but something else. Something even worse than her as a monster.

"And what about the scar on our 'Mate's chest?" Indo suddenly throws this question in the conversation, probably because of an impulse- hitting both of us right in the face, diverting the tension from between us into the wide spectrum of the room. What? Neth has a scar on his chest? How would he know?! I didn't know that! Don't just drop such a bomb shell! I have to say that I am surprised by this one- from where does he know? I give a quick glare to Netherlands. I could feel how Nethers heart dropped deep and he bit his lip too, revealing sharp fangs in the process.
"What do you mean?" she questions, either really clueless, which is rather unlikely, or just playing stupid. Indo stares at her, suddenly seeming very unsure, as she seems to be taken back a little. The utter irony of that could make me laugh, yet I don't dare to even open my mouth. She's already pissed at me, and I am not sure if I am still willing to risk my life any further.
"You know what he means, tell us." Malay cues in, all the sudden. I clench my teeth against each other and throw looks around the room, desperately trying to both stop them as well as stay out of this, silently. God, this went from 0 to 100 really fucking quick. And even Mal's sounding quite pissed. Seeing that now there is seemingly no way, or very little to talk herself out of it, she sighs in defeat.

"There is no reason to tell you. It's not of your business."
"If you don't tell us, I'm going to kick you out. And only you. We can deal with him alone." Mal responds rather serious and I nearly choke on my saliva, needing to pause for a moment as well. WHAT. The woman grunts, rather irritated at Malays sudden outburst.
"This isn't your house, you can't just kick me out."
"Are you sure about that?"
"Yes."
"Well you are quite the fool then." Malaysia rolls his eyes and I am left flabbergasted. I didn't know Mal had a personality like this? Excuse me??? When did that happen???

The woman eventually exhales, done with the entire conversation, straightens forward and nods, still irritated and annoyed.
"It happened in a fight some time. It just finished healing. He barely survived back then. And as you see from both his shocked expression and the aura he is emitting; it's giving him trauma again. Great job, you two." she say blankly- growling at the end, hoping that the we won't ask for details. Silence. Indo looks away in discomfort, probably regretting asking. My other friend stays silent as well, but he isn't dropping that unusual façade quite yet. Malay rips the silence into a million pieces again- also feeling my stare, wanting to murder him to a certain degree.
"How can he make his eyes glow?" Mal then asks, reverting back to a previous topic, to leave this rather awkward moment behind. Malay was clearly interested. The woman remains irritated yet visibly relaxes a little.
"I don't know- it just happens." she answer, shrugging. But only a little.

"I have one last question if you wouldn't mind-" Mal continues and suddenly says, being to my own surprise very polite. Maybe he is just a little nervous at her mood dropping drastically?
"What if I do mind?" she says, sounding provocative. Indo immediately jumped on it, seeming passive aggressive himself.
"Please?" Indo asks.
"No. I mind it a lot actually." she hissed. Malay sighed.
"Please- we all know it can't get worse... please?" he sighs- keeping the straight face has tired him- it's visible. But it's also visible that he all can't keep that expression for much longer. I glare at the

time. One hour has passed as the 'game' got as serious as it is, so of course it's tiring him.
"**And what question would that be?**" she ask back, hesitatingly, glaring at him. Malay then asked something I really did not expect:

"The guy isn't mute... right?"

.

.

I feel my heart beat stop. I remember our conversation right after Malaysia heard her and Neth chat on the balcony of the guest room, but I specifically told both of them to keep quiet about it. I totally forgot it afterwards. Malay, you just screwed everyone of us over. Indo's eyes widen, as if he suddenly remembers as well. I don't even dare to look at the demon in my house hold, afraid of what might happen. Netherlands remains practically unreadable. He stands up and takes a few steps away from the conversation. As his back remains turned to the rest of us, he speaks loud and clearly for the first time in 70 years:

"*You are right. I am not mute, congrats on finding out, Malaysia."*

21| Decision

Indonesia's POV

I sit on the couch in total silence, finding myself with a rather empty head as well as unwilling, no, unable to move. The silence doesn't once befall me, but also the entire room, after the dramatic scene unfolds.
Total.
Absolute.
Silence.
Then, out of nowhere, all the expressions flood my head, and my heart start beating very fast against my chest. I try my very best not to hyperventilate. Malaysia did say that he wasn't actually mute, yet I wasn't really sure of it, I didn't even believe nor think of it anymore, but he does have a voice, he lied to us. Both of them lied. Why?! The lingering question is screamed silently through the living room and I just stare at him. The woman sighs almost dramatically, biting her lip as if thinking carefully on how to continue. She was not prepared, that is clear. She eventually falls onto the armchair, leaning back in defeat. She then sighs, just shaking her head. It is as if the anger just suddenly left and it is replaced by a tired curiosity. It also confirms that she was in on it, as she does not seem surprised. I pause, a little surprised that my inner thoughts don't comment at the matter, as if I had found peace in myself. I mentally shake my head to focus on the important matter in front of me. The mystery of the man I like has just grown by a large number, both of them really are hiding something enormous from us. His identity perhaps? Do we actually know him or not? What else is there, I'm curious.
Though, I want to hear his voice again. It sounds even deeper than I could have imagined. Familiar in accent even, but that probably is nothing.

"You need to explain that to everyone. Right now. And don't you dare not." Malay says rather seriously. It was a little shocking when

his usual positive and careless demeanor suddenly shifted to this serious guy. He glares at her, but mostly at him. There is another sigh, and as if the woman suddenly has a mood switch, she relaxes immediately, perhaps the calmest person in this room even. I really don't get her at all, but I've said that a few times already, I think. She proceeds to roll her eyes- proving my thought. Then she looks over to my 'Mate'.
"Why'd you do that? We could have gone out of here without you saying anything. You know I'm good at *talking* things out in my favor, and I am on your side. And you know that." she asks without any emotion in her voice, sounding tired and vaguely threatening, as if he dared to oppose her. I could feel Malay getting a bit madder since she had decided to ignore him completely. Understandable.
The cloaked guy, the only one standing, turns around, looks down and starts playing with his fingers, ignoring Malay too, making my friend fume.
"Sorry, it just felt right for some reason. I mean we've been living here for quite a while now. I think they are trustworthy." my 'Mate' says very softly, seemingly hesitant to use his voice. Phil next to me freezes up totally. The female glared at him for a second or more, probably thinking, then she stands up, putting her hand in her pockets.
"Very well- you got in this unnecessary situation all yourself- you're getting yourself out there. I'm going on a walk until this air here isn't as thick as now. Tell me about it later, will you?" she said and walks to the door frame, not waiting for any response. Yet suddenly, she turns.
"Phil, would you be so kind to accompany me?"
"S...Sorry, I can't. I want to know further as well." Phil replies, his voice shaking a little. Is he scared of her? I can totally see why he'd be afraid, but isn't that still a little extreme reaction? She seems so small and frail, there is no way that she can't hurt anyone without her sarcasm. I think she just needs to go somewhere to let her frustration out, she probably hates loosing more than I do. It's fine with me that she's leaving as I got murdered and being full of holes with her glares. Malay looks after her.

"But! ... Uhm... See you later, I guess..." he mumbles his goodbye and like that she is gone. He recalibrates himself to stay in his

serious demeaner; yet he does seem rather mad to have the betrayal confirmed. I think anyone would, yet I just don't feel so strongly about it, perhaps because I like him? Like, now we could talk all night and tell sweet things to each other and it'd be so much easier to get to know him! Malay isn't having it though; he must be really hurt to have lived under that lie. Truth is one of his strongest morals, after all.
"Now explain 'Mate', or are you also lying about knowing your name and your amnesia and the fact that you clearly remember a lot? HM?" he hisses at him, aggressively slamming his first onto the table, I remain almost surprised that it did not break. My... *partner* flinches violently at the violent and loud gesture, obliviously afraid and uncomfortable, shaking, whining quietly even. Malaysia wasn't done though. I couldn't do anything but watch in silent terror as my friend has been driven over the edge already.
"Quit your damn bullshit! I know that you are lying! Lying, lying, LYING! Why are you doing this?! Why have you been doing this?!" he yells, standing up. My eyes widen. Phil looks even more shocked than before- also having not expecting him to flip out like that. In forever.
"P-Please, stop y-yelling...-" the taller male begs.
"Mal-" Phil tries to intervene in attempt to calm the situation down- but it was too late.
"**NO! I DON'T CARE!** I BET YOU ARE LYING AGAIN! I MEAN YOU DONE NOTHING BUT THAT! I BET YOU DON'T EVEN LIKE INDO HALF AS MUCH HE DOES LIKE YOU!" Malaysia continues yelling, throwing his arms in the air, his head turning a little red. My stomach turns upside down as the words fell. I didn't want my relation with him being argument in this discussion.
No, you really can't call this a discussion...
"*I-I'm s-sorry, I didn't see any other way. I was... very afraid.*" it came back way quieter than the words beforehand. I realize from his body language, that he might be about to collapse again. Not again. That would make everything so much worse!
"But are you **really**?! Don't you see that your words are practically **USELESS**?! WHO EVEN ARE YOU?! WHY SHOULD WE TRUST YOU?! **WHY HAVEN'T WE KICKED YOU OUT YET?!**" Malay continued on, getting scarier each second. I've never seen him that angry. Not even in the past when he had much better reasons to be angry to hell and back. Malaysia is always the total opposite! I start

feeling a horrible sense of guilt since I've done nothing yet to break this, it is very clear that the situation has been taken too far and right now there is just suffering. A knot forms in my stomach and suddenly, the walls are closing in. I try my hardest to focus to not get an anxiety attack as well.

I remember what North Korea had taught me the week I spend at his and South Korea's house. I take deeps breaths and focus on my pulse, closing my eyes, trying to cut out Malays' yelling for a moment. Eventually, I do feel a little less anxious and I send a silent thanks to the brothers before opening my eyes to readjust to the situation in front of me. Malaysia is now quite close to the taller man, who's backed against the wall. A horrible spot to be in in this situation. I am a little disappointed at Malay, things could and need to be handed way different.

We three have always been against violence, but right now I fear that my friend might actually do something!
"MALAY! STOP! IT'S ENOUGH!" Phil, who had suddenly stood up, as if lighting had struck him. He reached for the other Asian country's shoulder, tearing him away from the spot, allowing my 'Mate' to have more space to breathe. Mal only turns his head around to him.
"NO- I WANT HIM TO HEAR HOW WRONG THAT BEHAVIOR-"

"PLEASE, DON'T HURT ME!" the spoken of man suddenly cries out loudly- violently shaking as he is leaning against the wall in search of some sort of stability. The room falls into silence immediately, as if time had stopped. Phil simply lowers his shoulder, though his hand remains on the other one's shoulder- his expression changing from mad to surprised. Malay's eyes widen as his jaw continuously open and closes, speaking silent words. I just keep on sitting there like before, still frozen. The aggression in Mal's eyes had vanished in an instant, I really hope he has returned to his usual self. The idea of harming someone was clearly bothering him, and his eyes darted around the room for a moment.
"I- I was not going to- wha-" Malaysia responds, now quiet and softly. I couldn't tell exactly what he was feeling- there were multiple things coming from him. Shock, discomfort, disbelieve, the feeling of sudden overwhelming, as well as other things. Phil

carefully furthers the distance between them, clearing initiating that he doesn't intent on physical harm or any activity suggesting that. The silence befalls the room once more and I clench my teeth. No one knew what to say. I haven't said ANYTHING the entire time, and I feel really bad about it! After some time, my stomach had suddenly the urge to defend my partner now.
"Think, Malay. If he really revealed his voice to us- that means he sure trusts us a lot- right? He did say he was afraid of us, hence the secrecy, and like that woman said- they could have gone out of this conversation without doing anything. Do you see where this argument is going?" I finally shove myself into the deafening atmosphere, a little too harsh perhaps, me and Malay looking at each other. Phil just glares at me for a few silent moments- exactly knowing at least one reason why I am defending him. But it is quite oblivious at this point, so that isn't telling me anything new. Then, the striped country sighs, lowering his gaze.
"Yes, I- I see. I just felt very betrayed, he has been staying here for a while now, you need to understand."
"I-I am sorry too, I think I should have explained my reasonings from the beginning... I just- couldn't bring myself to anything. I was so scared." my 'Mate' presses out, a little louder and more confident. It sounds so honest and emotional that I am left in awe. Malaysia looks up and we all watch as the tall man proceeds so slowly sit on the couch again.
"Really, I'm sorry I've yelled, not sure what came over me. I'm usually not like this, I promise." Mal mumbles. My 'Mate' deeply exhales and he does take some time to respond, as if he still wouldn't believe it-
I try to be the supportive boyfriend that I am and shuffle closer to him, laying my hand on top of his.
"Hey... it's over." I whisper- trying to help him calm, putting my head on his shoulder. The air around him feel oddly hot. Sure, he always radiates warmth, yet this time it's far more, like *I'm sitting next to fire. I guess it might be due to the stressful situation.*
I get nothing more than an exhale, then a shaky response.
"I-I'm sorry-" he presses out once again and I lean in to hug him, ignoring the other two countries in the room. They are unimportant right now.
"Shhh... If you don't want to talk it's okay, you don't need to. I just want you to be aware that Malay is sorry and everything is going to

be okay, just... talk with us about your probl-"
"I CAN'T!" the response is pitched and rather violently, shocking me.
"O-Oh. My apologies"

I look up to the others- now needing a little help as well. Guess they're not that unimportant. Phil picked up on the clue and dared to speak again.
"Please, don't pressure yourself too much about it. I'm really sorry that this happened, I swear it's the first time something like this is going on." he says slowly, in a really calming and soothing voice. I feel the man next to me exhaling, then he actually lifts his head again so we could understand better.
"I-It's fine, really, I deserve the 'critics', I am at fault after all, I... understand really well how Malay feels. I'm taking the a-apology... I also that just don't talk that much in general and I don't have a good voice anyways..." he sighs softly, taking the apology.
I feel relieved. Phil feels relieved. Malay feels relieved. The atmosphere gets a little less tense.
"No! You have a nice voice; I really like the sound of it!" I say, trying to make him feel better about his vocal appearances- I also want to make sure that I can hear it more often in the future. Mal just watches- then he decided too that it would be the best if everyone just cooled down individually for the time being, like the woman when she left, and like that he entered the conversation.

"Just- Just go cuddle again, upstairs or somewhere like that, get some privacy you love birds- it's gonna solve our problems in the end for sure." he sighs and I feel my cheeks heating up at the statement. But I feel positive about it. Al Allah. Phil rolled his eyes, but then he actually chuckled poorly about it too.
"Yes, he's right. Go and do that. Pff- Have fun~" he giggles in attempt to light the mood a bit further, he and Malay desperately trying to make the tension disappear, making me blush more as I feel the same energy radiating from the cloaked-up man. Yet, I decide to lean into the situation just to make it funny.
"PHIL-" I therefore start yelling. Trying to convey anger and embarrassment in my voice, though I will gladly do what I'm asked off, as I am suddenly interrupted by my 'Mate' pulling me into a hug from the side. I exhale, my lips curling into a smile and hug back, patting his back to again assure him everything would be alright. In

the next moment he stands up and I get picked up in the movement, ending up being carried. I didn't dare to look around. Now, THIS GOT WAY TOO EMBARRASSING IN SUCH A SHORT TIME AL ALLAH!
I simply lean my, at this point probably completely red, face against my 'Mate's chest, accepting my fate. It's not like I don't like it, it's just that Malay's and Phil's presence is bothersome. I could already hear the snarky comments developing in my friends' brains and close my eyes.
"Just go upstairs already, please- we should only do this in privacy." I whisper, not sure if he understands it as it was really muffled. But I guess he had heard it because shortly afterwards I felt us moving.

Netherlands's POV

I carry a very embarrassed Indonesia upstairs to his room as my emotions sort themselves out. This experience was so scary, I've never seen Malay so out of it. I feel really bad about it now. This was probably the worse argument I had in years... so glad I didn't hyperventilate or even burst out into flames again. And the fact that she just left like that is bothering me. And just because any of this didn't go according to her plan/liking. In the end though, she's sort of right and it was fair, none of this could have happened. But I think it was an important and necessary step in the right direction. At least I got Phil and Indo and how they have defended me, now I really feel bad for hiding so much. Yet, it'll be much worse if they know, so I simply cannot do it. Malay would be more angered than he already was today, and maybe then his house-mates won't be able to stop him. And-
I shove some other pressing thoughts aside and focus one the one person in my arms. He is unbelievingly light and just so precious. I honestly could cry, because of him and the shaken situation, and also because of the return of my morals, as they have shown so much understanding and kindness. But again... I can't. It's tearing me apart from the inside. I have the feeling it isn't over yet. Malaysia's reaction was excepted: of course, he was mad at me for lying to them. I have been staying here at their safe space for quite some time now and they found some things out. Phil wasn't very mad and stayed rather neutral, as he already knows the truth, but who knows? Him and her definitely have something going on, maybe he has some secrets that he wants to keep too? Or did he just not take the tension well?

I shake my head to clear my thoughts as I reach the first floor of the building, deciding to worry later and keep my focus on my... my Boyfriend. The thought alone makes my cheeks burn. But I like it, sort of. I also liked it when we kissed. If life only would be easier... I look down to the small man. The guy right here sure really has a crush on me. Also, back before the discussion escalated, she was WAY to aggressive about the whole thing. Or was she? Damn, I'm that stressed that I just cannot think straight. I basically felt her head boiling next to me, trying to think of a way out... until Maly started threatening, and everything went wrong. She would and probably will say I'm getting too emotional over them for the fact that we are only here to 'backstab'. I'm not saying that I don't like the way she is doing things, or should I? I can't really speak up against her. I'll- I'll see about that later- now to calm Indo, who is still hanging in my arms. I mean, yeah sure- he's cute- and he already likes me, a lot- and I seem to like him, a lot too, but I'm still not entirely sure about a relationship. And there would be the thing with me being the Netherlands... one of the hated countries. I sigh, mentally as my thoughts spin in circles and repeat themselves over and over.

I shake the negative thoughts fully away- deciding that's not the pain worth directly dealing with them right now. I got to calm down first. It'd be a waste of energy. So, I enter Indonesia's room, closing the door behind me. Indo begins to move around in my arms, signing me to let him down- so I did just do that. Then he obediently walks to his night stand... and gets the blindfold I gave him some time ago. He has it still with him? I did not expect that. What is he doing? I watch him looking at the blindfold, then at me.
"Can we, like- still cuddle? I think you really could really use it, relaxing you know." *Indo asks slowly. I simply keep staring at him. He stops looking back and stares at the ground. I mean- he looks like he really needs it as well. And we like each other, it should be fine. And even now, he's still respecting my boundaries...*
It is clear that there is a good amount of guilt coming from Indo for some reason. I walk over to him, standing in front of him. Indo doesn't look at me, his eyes glued to the floor. I sigh, and shakily put my hand on his cheek- it's burning and making my hand feel almost cold in comparison. The gesture of mine sort of forces him to look at me. This action of mine made him blush more than he already had, yet he doesn't show any retaliation. Guess I could say Indo is often a tomato, if he

blushes that much. I hope he doesn't turn into one someday. Would be a shame with such a sweet, innocent person. I pause after hearing my thoughts. I remind myself that it is now alright to talk before answering.
"I'd really like that too."
"See? Your voice is so soothing, I already like listening to it!" *Indo grins cheekily, getting me a little flustered. He always said the opposite in the past, that my voice is 'rusted' and 'unpleasant in the worst way possible'. I shake myself out of the negative thought process again, proceeding to nod. After a silent moment he cracks an even wider smile. Then he put the blindfold on, making me a bit confused, as he stumbles to the bed, sitting down.*
"It'll be more comfortable to cuddle for the both of us without you wearing your coat- and I respect you hiding your face. So, we'll go with me covering my eyes! I really don't mind!" *Indo explains- probably sensing my confusing, yet still smiling. I can't help it but to crack a smile as well. That's really nice of him. I make my way over to the door and lock it- then looked back at Indonesia. He sat blindfolded on his bed. I inhale, getting a bit nervous, yet I trust his words enough and take my coat off. God, this feels kind of weird. I put my coat on a chair and make my way to Indos bed, sitting next to him.*

Silence.

I needed a moment to just prepare myself for the event. I haven't had affection like this in forever. It's just so, new. I proceed to lay a little further down on the bed, Indonesia waiting patiently for me to be ready, then I carefully pull Indo on my chest, laying down. Indo proceeds to cuddle onto my bare chest again- just like we did that before. Now I feel my cheeks heating up as well as his very fast heart beat matches my own in some way. I rather awkwardly lock Indo in my arms, not really knowing what to do- but as long as he doesn't complain... it's alright?? Dear Lord, give me strength-
We simply continued to lie in this position. My mind wandered back to what Malaysia had accused me off earlier: "I bet you don't even like Indo half as much as he does like you!" I look at the smaller male and sigh, running my hand through his hair.
"Indo?"
"Yes?"
"About what Malay said..."
"Don't mind him too much."

"No, I understand his concerns and I see that my behavior was wrong, perhaps still is."
"I won't pressure you. Yet I do wish to see your face one day, and know your name." *he speaks and it's like a thorn in the heart. Hearing the silence, he quickly adds on.*
"But you can definitely take your time."
"Tell me again why you like a stranger this much?"
"I don't know, perhaps it's just the mystery and the thrill at the unknown. And the rest, you already know: tall, strong, etc." *he says it so casual as if there wouldn't be a chance that I'd do anything to him in this state, and to prove his point he feels for my biceps, squeezing lightly. I sigh and close my eyes, until he shifts and cups my face with both hands.*

Then Indo suddenly asks something I really wasn't expecting:
"Mate? Why are you feeling uncomfortable around me from time to time...?"
My heart surely stopped beating for a moment or two as I freeze. He noticed?
"Am I being too pushy? Am I making you uncomfortable?" *he questions in the sweetest voice. Yes. I didn't say that to him, of course, and I don't want to break his heart yet. I take a second to come up with the most basic response of all time.*
"That's, uh- I had some childhood traumas and sometimes I get flashbacks with certain events happening, you are just always there when it's being triggered." I quietly stutter- and well I basically didn't lie. Indo stays quiet, seeming to think. Meanwhile I was internally panicking, waiting for an answer.
"Sorry for asking but- what kind of childhood traumas?" *he asks again. I can't help it and exhale heavily.*
"L-like abuse... and other things I don't want to mention to myself, that's also why I yelled at Mal earlier." I whisper, feeling pure emptiness inside. The core memory of it somehow makes me feel more aggressive, as if I'd like to destroy something. Again- Silence. Suddenly I felt Indonesia hugging me tighter, making me gasp a little in surprise. I, once again, was not expecting that- then something was said which I've expected even less:

"I'm so sorry for this- I should have asked earlier! That way we could have prevented things from happening! It's my fault. I

couldn't help you with your trauma even as I knew it existed! Forgive me, okay?! Please stay here with us- everything is alright- or is going to be... I like you a lot, more than a friend- and I just want you to be happy. It makes me happy. Your friend said that you two would leave again soon- but I don't want to loose you!" *he suddenly goes on a rant, sounding lost and desperate. I stay silent, taken back by his words. Maybe it's the directness that keeps shocking me? He looks up, and I can see his face boiling.*
"Let me come with you when you leave- even if I hate her- it's worth for me as long I can see you smile again*!" Indonesia says- his voice cracking- almost sounding like he's going to cry, causing my eyes to widen. No, he can't be serious about that. He wouldn't want to leave everything behind for me. That would be naïve and stupid, irrational. Before I start panicking or anything, I argue back with reason stroking his hair. Indo rests his head on my chest.*
"Stay rational, Indo. You can't just leave your life behind for me."
"I would."
"You love me this much?"
"Yes."

I sigh, he is still childish. Almost idiotic, though I cannot deny the butterflies in my stomach. I again stay determined to push my doubts aside for the moment.
"Thank you" I quietly and calmly said- actually I was mostly trying to calm myself. Indo didn't say anything.
"And yes- I love you too. I'm sure you waited for me to say that." I continue to say, sitting up to hug him better. Indo retuned the hug immediately. I truly smiled. for the first time in a long time.

It was a happy little moment between us- but it was sadly interrupted by knocking erupting from the door, then a female speaking through it.
"He- I know you two are in here. I need to talk with him." *I heard the familiar voice of her. She is already back from her walk? How much time has passed? I started questioning things as she knocking, getting impatient.*
"It's quite important!" *she says in a serious voice. Oh no. I slowly let go of Indonesia. I feel him being a little upset about that we both got interrupted, and I pat him on the head.*
"I'll be back in a moment, don't worry." I say to him, and put on my coat, walking to the door, unlocking it. I got immediately pulled outside

the room before I could say anything, I was being torn to our room. I gave up calling it the guest room since me and her have been living there for some time now. Inside our room, she finally let go of me and sighed. I lean against the door.

"What's up? What is so urgent?" I ask. Something deep down in my stomach tells me already that this isn't going to end well. She turns around, her face wearing a very dark expression. She is still pissed.
"I think it's time to move on. We've stayed in this hell-hole long enough." *she speaks, looking at me profoundly. She isn't awaiting much resistance from me.*
"Wh- you mean like- now?" I question, taken back by the sudden proposal. I just started having a relationship! She nods.
"Everyone is so dumb here, it's so annoying!"
"But I don't want to leave!"
"W h a t ?"
"I'm just getting comfortable! I am this close to going back to a normal life!"
"You said you hated your life."
"Well guess what, it's different now." I argue back, a little shocked myself to defend my opinion in front of her like this. It's very adamant that she is not pleased with my sudden resistance.
"What makes you think they are different?"
"Well- "
"I thought you made it clear enough to yourself that your currently relations are built on a lie." *she continues, and the truth in fact does hurt.*
"No, I know they have changed!"
"Bullshit!"
"It's not!"
"Prove it then! Reveal yourself and see how it turns out or we leave." *she hisses at me, showing more aggression. I pull in air harshly. I haven't even started on planning out scenarios for this event! And now she is making me choose?! How cruel! As I remain silent, she steps closer, caging me between her and the door. Though in this form she is much smaller, it's not any less intimidating.*
"A third option would be me leaving this god-forsaken place alone, but for my part I'm sure we both don't really want that to happen." *she sings lowly in a honey sweet voice, giving me the creeps. I inhale and exhale heavily my brain working to think of*

something that could leave both of us satisfied.
"B-But why do you hate them so much?"
"That is none of your business! They are stupid, and so irrational in their behavior it is sickening to watch!" *she almost yells and I get confused. Irrational behavior? Despite Malay this afternoon, I don't think they are acting irrational... but happy? Is that her problem? That they are happy? Doesn't she want me to feel happy? I stop myself from continuing the thought. Is she this toxic? It can't be, after we spend so many years... I-I need to find a solution, I just need some more time!*
"How long?" I ask, suddenly out of breath, making it sound like more of a whisper.
"How long till what?"
"How much time do I have until you would be leaving?" I look her straight in the eyes, cold shivers running down my body. Her returning gaze seems searching, and then almost threatened as she doesn't find any hesitation in my eyes. Something had changed.
"Four days. 5pm, on the dot."
"I see."
"Well? What do you decide to do in the future?"

"I will attempt to fit in again without disguise. If they take it, I am staying!"
"And if not?"
"... Might as well burn the place to the ground." I say reluctantly, just to appease her. If they don't take it too well, I do need her on my side... though I really don't want to kill, despite the outcome. I watch her eye light up, as if she found the will to play this... 'game' again and I feel disgusted by it, as I have finally realized what monster actually stand in front of me. I am afraid of what she will do to Indonesia, and what she will do to this world.

Extra Chapter

My back rams forcefully into the uneven bark of the tree. I feel the bark through my pullover, scratching against my bare skin. As if I don't have enough scars already, this might be the most pathetic ones. I groan at the pain as my head hits the bark too, rather strongly. That'll leave a headache for sure, if I'm not bleeding already. As my legs give way, I slide down the tree to the ground, out of options. There is laughter and suddenly an array of sand is shot from the ground up right at me, it hurts like hell. Like many, little, bullets. I shut my eyes instantly to avoid the possibility of getting stones within them. A fatal mistake. Next thing going on is a heavy impact on my chest, leaving me breathless and gasping, and the foe uses the opportunity to shove my head into the ground. Laugher is heard.
"You're so weak!"
"Comical!"

Due to the pain and emotional belittling, tears well up in my eyes, and as I open them, I notice the group of people beating me up. Of course, Indonesia and his 'best friends'. They just had to surprise me while I was relaxing at my favorite spot, but now knowing that it isn't even safe here anymore is truly heart breaking. I cannot fight back even if I wanted to, it would prove their point. But... do I even want to be the nice guy anymore? No, I don't want trouble with anyone. In attempt to get back up and simply avoid the situation further, someone I had previously identified as Russia pulls my hair and head up right before slamming it into the ground again. The group keep laughing as Indonesia comes up to kick me in the face. Suddenly, everything feels rather blurry and my head spins, dinning from the impact. My nose feels runny, as if water would come out of it. Though it isn't water, but blood.
"Please... Stop." I mumble, yet my words are drowned by the commotion the other countries are making. The further beating and now, added loss of blood keep me light headed and I fade in and out of consciousness as I try gathering myself. How low have I sunken in life? Why did it get this far? And why is it only me? I'm not the worst.

Others deserve that too. I shouldn't be the only one being punished like this!
I feel anger rising in me, as if the old self that I have tried to get rid of since so many years is reappearing. The one that others call insane. But am I insane? Not more than the others, promptly. I have long fought the emotions and keeping them in control, but this state makes it hard for me to do so, especially in this weakened state. Thoughts about self-defense spin around my empty head, once in a long time, my hurt pride rising.

"Stop..." I press out, unable to tolerate their treatment any longer. The cold December ground drains me faster than usual, making any action feel more urgent und more welcome than laying and accepting the fate. Maybe it is better if they fear me again, at least I'll be left alone then. Russia pulls my head up again before I can collect or position my thoughts to form an opinion.
"Just look at your weak ass, you crybaby."
"Crybaby! Crybaby!" *it echoes through the ranks and I finally snap, throwing the built boundaries on not to be my past self away. A rather critical decision, that will change everything moving forward.*
*"**STOP THAT!**" I yell out and with a swift motion I grab and twist the Russians wrist. He gasps in pain and surprise, he finally lets go of me. I push him away and get up fast, yet carefully, almost loosing balance in the process. Though, I straighten up, ignoring the pain and my bleeding nose for the time being with the best of my abilities. The round has died down, and my angry glare hits Indonesia, Russia, America and Switzerland upfront. Switzerland is here too?! Frustration rises in me. I have trusted this man... and now he is using it against me. How could he?! I also notice Poland and Germany further behind. A heavy hit to see Germany here. And I considered him my best friend once. A traitor. I guess everyone in his family is and remains a traitor! They are all the same! The feeling of anger and betrayal clouds my mind and judgement and I loose control over myself.*

*"**You filthy pieces of garbage! All of you! Treating me like the last rat in the sewers**!" I shout short sentences, determined to now confront them, yet needing to take breaths in between after the kick into my ribcage.*
*"You treat me like I have purposefully eradicated all of humanity! **WHY?!**" I confront them, blood and tears streaming uncontrollably*

down my face as I am unable to keep any sort of composure. I just want it to stop desperately. I don't care anymore!
"You know why, Neth, for the millionth time." *Indo hisses and I shut him with a rather aggressive hand motion.*
"You're unreasonable! And childish! I am at fault for your daddy issues but you made everyone go to far! There is no way your God is appreciating you! ***Burn in hell!"*** *I shoot back and I see eyes widening. It must have been decades since I acted this way.*
"Shut your mouth, Netherlands! You're named that way for a reason!" *America cuts in.*
"Oh yeah?! Because I was ready to nuke the world over a personal issue?! Your father gave me that name because I made his life hell! But you are nothing in comparison to him! You are so much weaker as a person, he is disappointed in a son like you, no?"
"No he's- " *Ame starts yet I don't even let him finish.*
"Shut your unwanted mouth. Your family doesn't want you. You're their least favorite child anyways." I say through my teeth, rather cruelly. America stays absolutely silent, the color draining from his face. At least he is finally done for. Thoughts spin around my head as I keep out of reach from controlling myself, it is as if an external force took over. My eyes dart to the Russian, who has his usual unreadable expression on his face, yet I feel him being a little afraid. It practically radiates from him. He is next.
"And what the hell are you glaring at?!"
"Neth-"
"You should move your sorry ass out the way! None of you have allowance to call me by the short forms of my name, but of course, you assholes cannot respect a single thing because 'oh, you all are so great.' Isn't that right, communist?! The one actively spying on people's privacy!" I point my finger at him, needing to breathe again. My head keeps spinning and the sound of the cold December wind is drowned by my own pulse, that it steadily ringing in my head.
"You have always disgusted me." I mumble loudly under my breath.

My next victim is the Swiss man, and I have the exact words to insult him.
"And what about eh? You Nazi." I talk, as if challenging him. Switzerland seems calmer than the rest, he only frowns a little.
"Netherlands, this is not the time- "
"Of course it is the time! I can't believe the supposed 'therapist' is also in

for bullying me, you traitor! You always keep untrue to your own vows and get mad when I call you out for it?! You narcissistic piece of cow shit, that's what you are!" I have the urge to just break the three's limbs, though I just have enough control not to see red. Still shaking from the outburst I carefully take steps from my position down the path me and also the other bastards arrived from. I feel the anger bubbling in them too, yet they leave me through, perhaps intimidated by my Hight. I don't speak another word with them, yet I stop at Germany and Poland, glaring down to them. Poland hides behind Germany, afraid at my outburst and even my former 'Friend' seems shocked, yet I simply scoff. "I am disappointed, Poland, how could you, out of all folks hang out with such braindead, greedy and terrible people. It doesn't make you better than they are, you are equally as worst." I mumble, the heated anger in my voice replaced by cold humming, colder than the breezes floated by on this elevated area. Next, I give an absolute glare to Germany. He seems hurt, but not nearly as much as I am.

"Traitor. You Germans are all the same. I never want to see your façade ever again." I press out before continuing to walk.
"N-Neth!"
"Shut up! You're not allowed to call me that, monster!" I yell back, feeling tears overwhelm me again. I also see tears wailing up in the Germans eyes, yet I lack the empathy to care... I... I lack the empathy? That is so much like my old self... The emotional pain and realization set in as I walk away further away from the group. Oh God... it really happened; the one thing I have tried to prevent happened! I expect them to continuedly bully me or take revenge in an instance, yet nothing happens. I proceed to walk home. My head feel heavy, full and empty at the same time and I keep ignoring the dizziness as I unlock the door and walk in. Dutch Republic notices me and begins calling up to me with some shit, though I don't even hear what he says and I keep going upstairs, as if stunned. I don't stop until I am in my room. Feeling as if all energy has left my boy all the sudden, I slide down the wall and let the tears out once again. I cry.
I cry at the unfairness.
I cry at their cruelty.
I cry at the loss of my best friend.
I hate it.
I hate my life.
I know it won't be better.

It will stay this way, or be worse.

"...Neth?" *someone softly calls out, and I lift my head to notice Luxembourg sticking his head carefully through the door. I weep a little more before speaking very broken sentences.*
"H-Hey L-L-Lu- Lux." I sob, my throat refusing to let me speak. My brother slowly enters the room, locking the door behind us. I see pain on his face, he feels sorry for me. I suppress any negative emotion connected with 'someone feeling sorry' for me. It's like him. I don't want to be like him. Being myself today was already way too much.
"What happened, Neth?"
"I-I-I- I let- let m-m-myself out-" I struggle to form sentences. Lux moves closer and the emotions overwhelm me again, fear and distraught setting him.
"I-I b-became like- like t-t-them- I-I was cruel-" I stutter and let Lux put a blanket around us, him sitting down next to me.
"Do you... mean your old self?" *he asks, and I only manage to nod.*
"Oh Neth... I'm sorry to hear that." *Lux frowns and takes me into a hug. I feel like he is the only one realizing the pain I am going through, and how hard it was for me to change all these years ago. But it was so easy for him to come back. I am scared. Of myself. My brothers warm embrace is helping me to relax after a while, though my head feels very heavy still. Soon, I stutter a description of the situation at hand.*
"A-And then I... I couldn't b-bear it anymore." I weep and Luxembourg hands me a tissue, which I gratefully take, using it immediately.
"These bastards... they can't let it go! There are so childish!" *my brother shares my frustrations and I look at the ceiling, taking a deep, calming breath before expressing the cruel words I have said.*

"I told America his family doesn't love him." I sigh. Luxembourg looks at me, surprised, a little shocked maybe, yet he stays silent to keep listening.
"I told Russia he is a criminal."
"Neth..."
"I told Switzerland his image of 'Neutrality' hurts everyone."
"..."
"I *told Poland he is a disappointment."*
"..."
"I- I told Germany he is a monster, and a traitor."

"Nether, that was really cruel."
"I know, I know! I should just have kept my mouth shut! I know that!"
"Wait, listen!" *Lux tries to persuade me, yet I already spiral down to the worst parts in my mind again.*
"I am stupid, dumb! I should have prevented this and simply let them be at it! They would want to take revenge for sure! You must hate me too I-" I wail like a waterfall, my pulse increasing and the walls closing in, as the possible consequences of my action flood in my head. Though, Lux suddenly shuts me up.
"Neth! It was right for you to fight back. Everyone has been bullying you for way to long! And you are absolutely right, Germany is a traitor!" *he exclaims with a rather authoritative voice. Lux sighs before continuing.*
"I have all these years admired your patience and will to avoid conflict, but I am proud you defended yourself from them. It is within your right."
"*B-But what will everyone else think?"*
"Do you really want to care about what the others think? Or do you just want to fit in?"
"I... I just want a normal life. One where I can go outside without anyone gossiping about me."
"We always have had gossip behind our backs, Neth."
"I know."
"But I get what you mean. I might have an idea to boost your confidence, though!"
"Yes?"

"We should mix your current self with your old self!"
"WHAT?!"

22| Sweet and Sour

Indonesia's POV

My fingers tap impatiently against the wood on the bed frame. I had taken the blindfold off and at the moment I am looking out the window, just waiting. Anticipating. When is he coming back? She had rudely interrupted us and torn him away. Though, the happiness is bubbling up inside me. It would be even more if he was here again. I almost cringe at myself whenever I think about how much in love I am, even though I don't know him that well. That will change soon! But right now, in this exact moment, I just want to enjoy cuddling and being close to him, and maybe I'm going to kiss him again. I really want to, to be honest, I want to share my affection with him, he seems lonely at times. I am curious about the scar I have felt too. I feel like I just can't know enough. Yet, if I dwindle on that thought too much I might fall into depressions, I surely don't want that! I sigh, turning my head around. Well- here isn't much to see here, just my room. I could clean it again, Phil would be happy, though it is just alright enough. My sorted chaos better stays sorted chaos!

Since everything is calming down again, and all the shock, arguing and Malay scaring the crap out me with his behavior, I lay down and glare at the white, yellowish ceiling of my room. I close my eyes. I feel tired from everything- but at the same time I couldn't fall asleep with my heart still racing. But feeling like I could go out like a light I eventually do fall asleep, dreaming about mine and my 'Mate's relationship in the future. I'm sure it'll be wonderful! Before my brain was able to start to imagine anything else- the door reopens, then closes again. Turning my head, I see my partner standing at the door, fiddling with the key in the lock. My lip curl into a smile as I watch him do so. There is the locking sound, and he turns to me afterwards, tilting his head. I wave a little yet say nothing as he approaches and sits down next to me on the bed.

Only then, the guy speaks.
"*Sorry I took so long, but no one will interrupt us now...I hope."* I hear the quiet voice of my 'Mate' speak to me, and it just warms my heart. The answer of him causes me to smile more.
"Oh- No, no, it is totally fine- nothing happened anyways- you didn't miss a single thing, I swear." I reply and get a slight smile.
"*You're so silly sometimes*." he chuckles lightly and I lean against him in retaliation. Good to know that we are completely alone by now. And staying alone. I was also thinking about asking what was up- but he seems to be in a rather dire mood and she had sounded serious, I wouldn't want to make the mood worse by asking. Suddenly I got pulled into a hug. My heart rate immediately spikes as I am not blindfolded and he trusts me with this close contact already! I feel a little awkward and restrain from looking up and in his face, so I simply keep grabbing onto his coat, waiting for anything to happen next.

"Indonesia?"
"Yes?"
"I... I have probably asked before, yet it doesn't leave my head."
"What is it?"
"You might feel uncomfortable with the topic."
"I don't care, you already got me curious."
"Well, uh, about the Netherlands."
"Netherlands? Again? We talked about him so much already." I wonder, both curious and a little frustrated. What is the great deal with a dead guy?!
"Sorry..."
"No, go on, please. I'm not afraid of it anymore."
"Afraid?"
"I was afraid of accepting him again. Even after he changed. And I had already spun a narrative that I was afraid to break out of. It was just easier to go along with it." I sigh. My confession is met with silence, as the other male seems to be thinking. He takes my hat off again and puts his hand in my hair, stroking it while thinking.
"What would you do if he suddenly reappeared?"
"Huh?"
"Would you continue your narrative?"
"I- "

"Even if others would try to push it again? Or would you try to get to understand him, and would find a way to come to terms with him?"
"..."
"Would you leave the easy route?"
"What... why are you asking that? What are you implying?" I question, clueless. His caressing stops for a moment and the breathes out, as if he had been holding his breath.
"Nothing I... was just curious. Never mind."

As I ponder on the meaning behind the sudden questions, I feel him leaning against the wall. I snuggled up into his chest to not fall off, still resisting the urge to look at him. He must trust me a lot. But I love this- I love what we're doing so much. I think I could stay like this all day without letting go. It feels safe and warm. He smells good. After a while of cuddling, enjoying each other. I feel myself smiling more, shifting a bit around- getting even more comfortable. But then, it somehow feels like he's about to stop cuddling with me. I feel like I need to take my chance now or I won't have my kiss. And that'd be a real shame, in my opinion.

Netherlands's POV

I'm cuddling with Indo- I actually like it, feels very calming, especially welcoming since I am facing this crisis, this dilemma again. I simply held him close without the blindfold, as I need to show myself anyways. I only have a few days left until a potential decision. I am not sure if it affects the outcome if others, especially Indo discover my identity already, and not like Phil did. Though, Indos hesitation on the question is scaring me a little, yet I ought to follow through with the plan! I cannot back down further, I have made that decision! It also has been some time since I felt that warm and comfortable inside, where this void inside my heart isn't filled with food. I think... I think I made the right decision with accepting his confession, liking him officially back. Though, I assume he hasn't told anyone yet. Indo starts moving and in conclusion I stopped running my fingers through his hair. He seems both excite yet nervous for some reason. I wonder what's up now? Has he made up his mind? I thought we went through all the trouble for today- so what's wrong now? I start worrying instantly, even if the problem could be minimal. I have always been this way, overthinking. Indo backs

away from my hug a little, not daring to look me in the eyes. Oh dear. I mentally sigh. I kind of hope he would just: see my face, but I don't really want to tell him to do so either. His right hand gropes up my arm to my shoulder. In the meantime, I stay, confused. What in the word is he doing now? His hand ended up caressing over my neck- making me shiver- then holding my cheek, caressing more over my face, making me blush. He reaches with his fingers over my cheek, reaching my nose and eye, which I close, silently letting Indo do his thing, which seems to be plastically scanning my face. Right, he hasn't had much to imagine it from so far. He then caresses over my lips. I grab onto the bedsheet so I wouldn't flinch or shiver as much. This is making me now nervous too, but also sort of anticipating for whatever is next to come.

Indo then inhales and with closed eyes suddenly he pulls my head down- our faces being inches apart from each other. I flinch a little and my eyes widen. This is sudden! Does he want a kiss. I look at his façade for a moment. He doesn't dare to look at me, yet he seems needy. Adorable. Why couldn't he have always been like this. I find myself grinning at him a little sad before cupping his cheeks and kissing him.

The kiss holds for a surprisingly long time. I admit- I really like it. I'm not much of a guy with physical attraction, yet it feels just right, though it is still ironic who exactly I am doing this with. For the time being, I might enjoy it. I need more of it. Indo is the one pulling away first, needing to breathe. I don't really feel the need to catch my breath just yet. I guess the training over the past years has made my lungs strong. Though, at this point I'm surely very, very red in the face, and so is Indo. I feel my heart melt at the sight.
"You're adorable."
"T-Thank you- " *Indo exhales, giggling afterwards. I look at him and still hesitate a little- but decide to kiss him again. It just feels so right for some reasons. It is weird how I constantly reassure myself about this, as if a part of me cannot let go of the past despite everything that happened. Him? No, cannot be. I did leave him within myself. Or haven't I?*
Indo seems caught off guard as I keep going- but didn't wait long to return the gesture. Since I'm leaning against a wall, I need to push Indo away to breathe after a while of kissing- to tell the truth, I didn't think long about this entire thing and therefore I haven't had much air to begin with- but Indo didn't let me break the kiss- he really used all his strength

to press me back against the wall, trying to hold it. I can't say I am not impressed with his passion. He is rather dominant about this right now. It sort of fits his character, but not his height.
Just as I start to get really dizzy, Indo finally pulls away. I quietly gasp for air, cursing for mentally bragging about my lung capacity and then ending up breathless like anyone else, breathing heavy. Indo, also catching his breath, giggles.

"Was that ok?" *I hear him questioning.*
"I-it was g-great." I stutter. Indo smiles widen, laying back down on me. I simply let him, a sigh leaving my lungs, still progressing what has been happening in such short amount of time.
"I love you." *-it suddenly came from the smaller country out of nowhere- who simply cuddles into my chest again. He really seems to enjoy being with me. I hope it will persist... it would be foolish to the believe it will. I already know it won't.*
"...I love you too." I quietly say, smiling, closing my eyes. I will be ready for that confrontation. I fade out of consciousness, being mostly mentally exhausted, drifting to a unusual peaceful nap for the situation. I won't just reveal myself to them immediately, but start out slowly and see how it goes. A good plan.

Indonesia and I both rest for a while in his room, sleeping and enjoying our presence next to each other, mostly silent, but we did talk. At 6 in the evening, Mal calls us all for dinner, so me and him are currently making our way downstairs. Indo stops though, there, on the middle of the stairs. I stop too, giving him a questioning tilt of my head.
"I was wondering if we could tell them."
"Tell what?"
"About our relationship?"
"Uhm." I pause for a moment.
"Not yet, alright?"
"Fair enough. We'll do it whenever you're comfortable!" *he gives me a reassuring smile and hops down the rest of the stairs, heading first into the kitchen. Following, I see the other three already gathered there. As soon as Phil saw me, he began to smile, waving a little- causing me to smile too. He earns a nearly deadly glare from her doing so, yet he avoids it at all cost. Poor Phil, I hope I can help him soon. She doesn't seem to take it lightly with him. I proceed to sit down.*
"What's for dinner?" *I hear Indo asking. Mal answers, not turning*

around, seeming to search for something in the fridge.
"Bread"
"Bread? Nothing wrong with bread- but why bread?" *the Indonesian questions again. Normally here is warm food made and served for dinner. Is the situation this dire that we only got bread? Bread?? In an Asian house hold?!*
"Yes. You hear right: B r e a d . Pfff-" *Phil rolls his eyes and chuckled, earning an annoyed sigh from Mal. Huh. Curious.*
"Yeah anyways, Mal forgot to go get groceries for today's dinner- so we are eating bread because we sadly don't have anything else-" *Phil explains.*
"nO I dIdn'T fOrgeT-" *Mal replies in an instant- using a funny voice. Phil opens his mouth to speak against Mal, also being slightly annoyed by now. She however, seems not pleased having to observe a discussion over food right now. She promptly hushes both of them, putting her hands on the table. She proceeds looking at them sternly before speaking*

"**Not sorry to interrupt- but I have a question.**" *she asks, earing the attention of everybody. Indo and I look at each other before returning our glares to her.*
"Which would be?" *Phil asks back, also curious.*
"Is the Dutch Republic still alive?" *she hums, grinning sinister. I feel the blood in my veins freeze, and I remain shocked. Oh my God, all the time I have been here, I haven't thought about confronting my father... I don't need this dilemma too! What is the world is she planning?! Phil seems surprised by the question as well. He trades a worried look with Malay before answering.*
"Yeah... why are you asking?"

23| Home?

Philippines's POV

"Uhm? Why are you asking?" I question again, looking at her, a little afraid of what she has planned in that messed up mind. She came back from her walk a few hours ago, after things escalated fully, and we had decided collectively, for our own good, not to mention to her what happened or Malaysia would probably have died. I am for real. But, what does she want from the Dutch Republic? It must be in connection with Netherlands for sure. I don't see any other possibility. My mind wanders to all possibilities, yet I always conclude that it will have a negative outcome for the world. This is in fact, a terrible idea. The monster in human shape looks at me. She seems anticipating, as if knowing what I have speculated this far.
"**I just want to talk with him about things.**" she answers after an unsettling pause with an unsettling smile on her face. I feel Netherlands frozen two seats away from me, he is horrified of the idea of confronting his father, and since not too long ago I understand why. I would be terrified as well. It clouds my mind with confusion. What is her goal? I thought she just wants Neth for herself, but this is throwing everything out the window. Why is everything so unpredictable?! It causes me more distress than the scars on my body. Yet, if I don't obey, she'll hurt me again, I fear that more than her going to Dutch.
I just hope Netherlands will be okay. Poor man, can never catch a break. I feel pity for him.
"You need to ask Belgium and Luxembourg about that- they live nearby, a few streets away." I offer in hope to appease her.
"**Oh yeah- I'd want and appreciate it.**" she answers with no emotion in a voice, yet that smile remains, making everyone in the room uncomfortable. I get glared at like 'don't keep me waiting too long', she then motions out the room without any food. Only as the sound of her steps is gone, I dare to breathe again. I want to speak,

yet I fear she's listening in somehow. It's getting as bad as back then, I need to calm myself. Though, I make the decision to not leave the room, I feel safer with the others here.
"O-Oh God..." Neth breathes out shakily and I notice Indo taking his hand in attempt of rescue.
"Why... Why would she do that?!" he continues, and I notice the seemingly careless hints he is giving of his identity. Everything makes less sense each second. He was so hard on keeping it a secret, but now he is practically blurring it out? What has changed?
"Do you... fear Dutch?" Malay questions very carefully, as if also processing what is happening, but slower and with less background information than I have. Neth nods and a pressed silence befalls the room.
"Do you maybe want to go on a walk?" Indo proposes and the taller, cloaked up male pauses, eventually nodding.
"Yes, please."

I watch both of them get up, Neth seeking comfort with the comfiness of his fluffy, orange scarf. It had taken ages for me to get all the blood out of it, but I am proud that I did. They disappear into another room, going out of sight. Indo should be okay as long as he stays with Neth, which is likely. And I will hopefully be okay sticking with Malay for now. I sigh and lean against the next wall, unsure of what to do next. Well, I don't have many options, but what CAN I do? Something tells me that this conversation is gonna be important for the future. Between Dutch and her, I mean.
"So... uh." I exhale again, trying to pick up a conversation.
"Any plans this evening?"
"Well, work." Mal shrugs, referring to content creation.
"Can I join you?" I ask, just not wanting to be left alone. My friend's eyes lighten up.
"Sure! They love you!"
"Oh shut up." I giggle under my breath. Me and Malay spend the evening together in his room. He has gotten a second computer set up there in case of emergency, and either me or Indo use it every time we join him on stream. It's fun, really. We game into the night, and my friend is so tired at the end that he doesn't question as I lay down in his bed to sleep. He sits down on the frame, looking at me. I expect him to mock me or anything, yet he just lays down as well. I feel glad that he is allowing me to rest with him, I fear being

alone.
The next morning, I wake up next to Malaysia. I feel better rested than the past week, and I cannot help it but to smile. I stay in bed until he yawns, waking up as well due to the alarm clock. We wish each other a good morning, get dressed separately and meet in the kitchen downstairs. We joke about yesterday evening and prepare breakfast for everyone. I currently drag out a funny situation from yesterday, where we discovered a bug in the game we were streaming, yet that was quickly shut down.

My overdramatizing act was interrupted by none other than her, stepping profound in the room. Her expression seems relaxed, but everything about this thing worries me. I try to remain calm as well.
"**I haven't gotten the address yet.**" she hums in a lower tone and I sigh, unwillingly writing it down to her. She gets close as she rips the paper out my hand, and I swallow heavily. Before I break into a sweat her head turns.
"**Malay, can you get *him*? I want him to come with me!**" she mumbles in an uncanny way.
"Alright... Give me a moment!" Mal answers, leaving the room. My heart rate increases immediately and I feel anxious being alone with her. She feels my anxiety, her lips curling into a cruel grin. Her ice-cold hand glides down my cheek and neck, and I feel as if frozen in place. I bite my tongue and a quite chuckle is heard.
"**You better keep doing what I tell you to do, or else.**" she hums, letting go of me.
"**Tell Neth to meet me outside. Without Indo.**"
"S-Sure..."

Netherlands and his friend were walking to Nethers old home. It felt weird to Neth to be there again, after more than 70 years. A little anxious too. He had lived there with his abusive father; Dutch Republic, and his caring siblings; Belgium and Luxembourg. He loved both his siblings, but didn't know how much emotions he could bare seeing Lux after their first encounter. The house of the Dutch family is big. The house is in Victorian style and painted in a pale blue, with dark blue accents. Behind the house is a garden with

a good size, yet it is not a marvelous as Neth remembered it to be, back when he took great care of it. Still, he though it to be beautiful. And now, there he is again, standing right before the gates, standing in front of his past. It was still unknown to him why exactly his friend wanted to be here, yet he supposed she wanted to fast forward with the 'unmasking' process of him. How rude to push such a big and trust needing decision like that, Neth thought. He stayed behind to dwell in the thoughts a little longer, as the woman walked without hesitation through the small planted area in front of the house, towards the door, ringing the bell. He followed her eventually, standing just a few steps behind her- watching, nervous and in anticipation. Soon after, Belgium opened the door. Neth could barely hold the tears back by and just looks at her, memories flooding his head once more.
He ponders if he should reveal himself, and how they would react to it.

"Can I help you ma'am?" Belgium asks, suspicious of the talked about strangers coming to her door. The other female tilted her head, not prepared to be addressed that polite. She never was that formal to begin with. She simply didn't care about formalities, it was a waste of speech and time, in her opinion. She cleared her throat, shaking the surprise off rather easily.
"My name is Liana, I'm here with him. I need to speak to your father." she explained. Netherlands sister tilted her head, valuing what is going on in front of her eyes.
"He... isn't here right now, but he should be soon- do you two want to come inside? We were about to drink some tea and eat cookies anyways." Belgium eventually offered, after a moment of silence, where Neth had almost wished for them to be turned down. His friend values the situation as well, nodding soon after.
"Sure. I wouldn't mind. I hope he comes back soon. It's urgent." she states her matter once more and makes her inside. Belgium looked after her, then at her brother who she has not recognized due to the cloaks. She tilted her head, her voice becoming softer. "Aren't you coming inside?"
"Y-Yes of course." Neth mumbled, this head yelling that he could simply speak Dutch. He wanted to use his native tongue again, yet found himself in unpleasant times to do so all the time. As Neth walked past Belgium into his old house, he almost got overwhelmed

by the memories and experiences he had made here. He found himself unable to walk further. Belgium felt a little uncomfortable with the staring, initiating a conversation.
"Do you not like our home?"
"No... No... It's good."
"What is wrong, then?"
"Nothing..." everything was wrong. All of this felt so wrong to Netherlands, yet he did not have the change to escape. He heard his sister sigh.
"Alright then, if you say so. I like your scarf." she mumbles before entering what Neth remembers to be the living room. He looked around a little further from the position he is standing in, eventually following his sister.

"Well, today is your lucky day! Everyone is praising my cookies- so I guess they're really good." Belgium giggled. Netherlands felt a little better, being reminded of the positive memory of his sister's cooking.
"**God, I haven't been here in years.**" the Dutch mumbled under his breath, in awe of the living room. It does seem like the old one, yet the all the furniture had been replaced over the years. It seems cleaner and tidier than he remembered. The eldest brother spotted Luxembourg in the living room, reading. He had to stop again, to gather himself mentally and not to cry at the sight of his beloved sibling being alive and well. He wanted to embrace him, yet wasn't sure if it was the right time for that.
"**I remember you.**" his friend mumbled, shoving herself past the couch. She glared down his brother to see what he was reading, and scoffs, leaving him be. Netherlands presumed she wasn't able to read Dutch, let alone Luxembourgian. Shaking a little, he sat on the couch, next to him. Only then paid the smaller man attention to him. He seemed surprise to see that stranger in his house, yet he didn't say anything, simply putting the book aside. Belgium has reentered the room, carrying a tea pot and two extra cups, smiling slightly when entering. She put the cups down, filling them. Luxembourg lazily took a cookie, observing Netherlands in disguise and the other woman.

"I have heard you want to speak to the Dutch Republic? How come?"

"It's private."
"Just curious. No one wants business with that old man."
"Aha." the woman responds, not caring much. Anticipation and tension rise, yet Netherlands didn't dare to speak. His mind was too messy, his voice would be shaky, and he wouldn't be able to compose himself no longer. So, he stayed dead silent, tense and uncomfortable in the situation. The others noticed his state of physic and mind as the cup with tea he had was also shaking. Before anyone could question him though, the Dutch man stood up, gave a quick and excusing bow, proceeding to speed walk out of the room and upstairs. He was originally heading in the way of the upstairs bathroom, yet he came to a stop as he was about to bypass his own, old room. Just looking at the door made him feel both nostalgic, yet also scared and clouded due to the many good, but mostly bad memories.

Netherlands's POV

It feels unreal. Surreal, even. This turning of evens is really stressing me. I take deep breaths in attempt to get rid of my anxiety, standing restless on the spot, debating what to do now, and how to handle the situation, standing in front of my room. Feeling the temperature rising within me already, I conclude impulsively I need to get inside. Yet I hesitate entering. With almost shaking hands, I open the door slowly, and spy inside the room. It's dark and the air smells old, dry and stale. To my own surprise, everything is tidy, yet seems untouched- the room being in a similar state just like before I left- well or as clearly as I remember. Dust is covering everything. I open the door more, slowly stepping inside. My mind goes blank as I take each shaky step. I stop at the bed and sit down, careful to not collapse it on it right away. I look around more. My old paintings and drawings litter the wall. My eyes rest on a stance, where the unfinished portrait of Germany rests. I get mixed emotions looking at it. I wonder how he was been doing today?
Do I even care? Am I supposed not to care?
After the betrayal.

I notice a piece of cloth folded on my bed. Inspecting it: I realize it is my old scarf. It holds the tricolor of my flag. I'd say that now it would be old fashioned to wear. I'm not saying I don't like it, it holds nostalgia,

yet I prefer my new, orange one more. It's fluffier and comfier. Yet, the old cloth isn't nearly as dusty as the rest of the room.
I stay inside the room a little longer, braindead, taking the atmosphere in. I stand up and wander to the window, looking outside. It has been decades, yet the view hasn't changed. I open the window and pull the hood of my head, sighing heavily. It is relaxing looking over the fields. The fresh air breezes by my face and I knead the space between my eyes, exhaling, already mentally exhausted. Do I really need to get down there, again? Can I not climb out the window like last time? I close my eyes for a moment, trying to relax my shoulders.
It'll be alright.
Surely, it'll be alright.

My thoughts get interrupted as a blood curling scream halls through the air. Belgium. I turn around and listen again. What in the world?! What happened! Fearing the worst, I rush out my room, stopping on the top of the stairs as I see Belgium and Luxembourg glaring frozen into the living room. The fear radiates from them and they seem very afraid. The room around me feels darker and more claustrophobic at the sudden, not knowing what is going on down there. Another scream echoes through the house, deeper, and male. Hearing the familiarity, I feel hot and cold at the same time. No way. As I make my first step down the stair none other than she presses out the hallway, blade high above her head, in attempt to slash down at my siblings. I loose temper and feel the energy spreading inside my body. It has been a good while since I have used my ability. With this energy at hold I pace forward with an inhumane speed, reaching back in the progress. I hit her in the face before she can slash my helpless siblings down, sending the body flying through the hallway which such force that the front door breaks down.
"LET THEM ALONE!" I yell after her, mad that she would even try such a thing. How could she. The woman rises again, black, goopy liquid retracing into her body, forming it to the usual shape. It was weird in the beginning, I had found it to be normal in the past years, yet right now it occurs to me again just how unhuman and inhumane this thing is. She glares at me, seemingly disappointed for a moment, yet that glare quickly turns into incuriousness.
"I was helping you; you know."
"Helping me?! By killing my siblings?!"
"They were just witnesses, they shouldn't have seen." *she sighs, unconcerned. She shakes her head and seems done with this situation.*

"I have done what I came here for. I'll see you later, Mate." *she hums and teleports, her body fading away to the air around her. I continue watching the spot she has stood on, my head racing and my heart pounding in my ears. I ponder what in the world she had meant when saying: 'I have done what I came here for'.*

"N-N-Neth..." *a whisper, soft and almost invisible rings in my ears. I force my eyes away from the outside and look down. My eyes meet with Luxembourg's first. His eyes are widen, and glossy, full of tears. He seems afraid yet fascinated. Belgium is huffed on the ground next to him. She has a similar expression to her brother.*
"You're... You're alive...!" *Lux whispers, as if not believing it.*
"How did you- Where- What-" *Belgium questions, out of breath. I feel my legs weakening, ending me on the floor too, in front of them, tears rolling down my eyes.*
"I'm alive. I-I'm h-h-here." I sob, both happy and sad. My siblings look at me before Lux shakily reaches out.
"This- This isn't a dream, right? You're real, right*?!" he questions, his voice beginning to shake too and I softly grab his hand, unable to look at him any longer.*
"Where were you?!" *Belgium asks, a little louder than before, yet I stay silent. Luckily, both of them let me peacefully life through all the emotions overcoming me right this instant. Lux keeps stroking my hand, silent tears rolling down his eyes. Belgium remains in shock too, yet she decided to hold onto my scarf a little, as if making sure I couldn't run away anymore. We remain like that for a little while, yet I pause as the smell of blood reaches my nose.*

Fresh blood. I pause further, inhaling.
"What... What is behind me?"
"..."
"Belgium, Luxembourg, why does it smell like blood here."
"T-This woman- she- she-" *Belgium stutters yet I cannot contain myself any longer and turn my head.*

Crimson blood soaks through the beige carpet in the living room, in the middle a mildly mangle corpse. Absolutely silent, I stand up, and the other two let me. I have seen lots of corpses, the deaths of so many by so differing methods over centuries, but it hasn't ever left me cold. A humanoid characteristic, I believe. But seeing my father murdered on the

flood, blood gushing out of the scattered stab wounds is truly another sight. The view mixes many emotions in me. Too many.
I feel grief, but I also have the feeling that I am supposed to feel grief. He was cruel, yet also my father. I am supposed to feel sad for a family death, am I not? Am I supposed to feel free? Lost? Hopeful? Hopeless? What am I supposed to do?! What should I do. My breathing stays deep, but it goes faster as the opposing thoughts are tearing me apart from the inside. The cold feeling in my body is replaced by a fevering sweat and heat, tears starting to evaporate from the corner of my eyes. A somehow different feeling makes itself wide in me.

I feel light, as if a stone was lifted from my heart. Is it wrong to feel this way?
"Neth?" *I hear Lux asking, yet it sounds far away in my head. A sensation inside my chest makes me feel an utter wave of relieve crashes down upon me. My skin bubbles, burning even as the fire spreads from my veins over my skin and flames up into the air. I ignore the fire for now and turn around, to see my siblings in disbelieve.*
"*I'm so sorry. I am so different. Please, forgive me." I speak, as the flames roam around the ground, setting the house on fire.*
"N-Neth?! How are you-?!" *Belgium yells, backing away.*
"I can't help it! I-I don't want to!" I yell back and Luxembourg thinks fast as the house catches on fire.
"Let's get out of here*! Through the garden!" he yells and Belgium moves past him, running out the house. Lux remains though, looking at me. He seems confused, afraid and lost, but also relieved. Feelings that I share. Despite the flames he states until I stop burning. The rest of the house though cannot be saved.*
"Lux..."
"..."
"I'm so sorry. I had to get away from this place back then..."
"I... it's hard to understand. Let us go out, okay?"
"P-Please don't tell the others." I question, afraid again. If my first attempt at reintroducing myself ends with the burning of my childhood home, I need some time to calm down. Lux nods and I carefully step closer.
"You have a lot to explain, Netherlands."
"I know... I know..."

24| Lost

Netherlands's POV

I, Luxembourg and Belgium stand outside the house as it is ingulfed by my flames, burning every memory linked to 70 years ago, as well as the corpse of my father. I- I cannot believe he is gone. Murdered, by her. I feel pressed, yet deep down rather happy. I don't think the others would feel similar though, so I better keep myself composed. I make it seem like I am calm and all that, yet in reality I am shaken up as much as the others. I didn't mean to be torn into a fire like that again, especially since I have made it clear to myself to stand by a decision and feeling! Damnit! I take deep breaths, attempting to sort my thoughts, yet it is impossible. The flames on the house burn as rapid as the thoughts spin in my head, making it burn just as bad. As tears slowly stop evaporating from my cheeks, I feel myself in a lack of balance. Blinking tears out my eyes my view gets clearer as well. My sister Belgium is the first of my siblings to break out the state of shock, and the first one other than me to break down, tears streaming over her face. She is visibly upset at the situation, running her hands over her face. I look at her, unsure on how to proceed, yet I huff down next to her, hoping to calm her. I hate her seeing cry like that, especially since it would be my fault as well.
"Belgium I'm... I'm sorry."
"Go away! You Monsters!" *she cries out furiously and I immediately step away, my heart sinking, shattering even at her reaction. Though I assume anyone would react like that. It's just my bad luck with people whenever I try to be myself... sad. Pathetic, really.*
"Why did you come back?!" *she yells.*
"I- "
"How did you come back?! This place in impossible to leave or enter in!"
"Why did you even leave in the first place!"
"Belgium- *" now Luxembourg too seems concerned, yet Belgie slaps his hand away as he reaches out, the sound is drowned by the feasting fire.*
"No! Since y-you came back everything went downhill! You murderer! Now my house is on fire! EVERYTHING! GONE!" *she*

pauses in need to breath, as she had been breathless before.
"You- You should have just stayed away! I hate you!" *she screams in a fit of rage with the remaining air in her lungs, the continued breathlessness making her squeal and cut off the last sentence at its end. She takes a step away, struggling to keep balance, gasping repeatedly for air, almost hyperventilating. My sister takes a firmer step afterwards, running away, crying and distraught. I stay frozen in place, looking after her. My sister hates me...*
I knew it. I knew this was a bad idea. A pounding headache punishes me for my actions. I turn my head around to my brother, yet he remains silent too, looking back to the burning house, his mind far away his body. Fear makes itself wide in me like an electric shock, Belgium is going to tell everyone! It'll be just like before if everyone finds out! And nothing will have changed! They'll treat me just as bad. I-I don't want that! My legs feel weak under the stress and pressure and I sink to ground, exhausted. I have been exhausted all week; it is beginning to drive me insane. I have just burned, and I'm afraid of doing that again.
"L-Luxembourg- " I stutter, suddenly breathless as well, desperate for a reaction from him. I see him breathing heavily but steadily, calming eventually. My brother gathers himself before looking to me. I cannot possibly read the look in his eyes; I only know that behind them is pure chaos. His mouth twitches a bit and he swallows before speaking.
"Let us go, for now."
"B-Bu- "
"Belgie is going to tell someone of the fire, you shouldn't remain here." *his voice is still in a state of shock, monotone and deadly calm. He is telling me to leave... just like Belgium did. I can't believe it. There is a dangerous silence laying between us. It feels so urgent, short, yet forever. It is as if he is refusing to process the event at the moment to get himself together. I look to the burning house as well, valuing my options. Perhaps she is right. They wouldn't accept me again. Especially if my siblings don't welcome me... no one will. I get more anxious thinking about the consequences if everyone knows.*

"But where to go?!" I desperately keep going.
"You should go out of the town for a while... I'll... get to you when things have calmed." *Lux suggests, taking my arm in attempt to get me up. I obey him and stand up, though I don't feel like walking through the streets, where preying eyes are watching through the windows, glaring, judging. It worsens my anxiety. I certainly do not need that! I can't stand*

it. I take a deep breath and reach out for my brother.
"I'm scared of going, Lux. I don't want to be seen." I mumble, feeling like a little child instant of a grown adult. I feel... impatience, annoyance radiating from Luxembourg, it fuels my fears. He feels annoyed with me? Does he really? My heart creaks at the realization. Am I just a burden after all? Still, after all those years? I am at fault for Dutch's death after all, but I thought he hated him as well?! Though, Lux manages to keep himself composed while I feel further lost. I wish the ground would swallow me whole.
"There isn't another way to leave." *he hums in a low tone and glares into the distance again, as if in a trance. I pull my hood over and exhale shakily.*
"Let us... go then."
"Neth I... I can't. You go alone."
"What?!"
"I can't just leave. This is my home. I won't fit in anywhere else."
Lux coos and I freeze in place again. Again, he wants me gone! He doesn't want to be associated with me. I back away a bit, shocked, throat closed. My hands feel cold and I start shaking, mind fogged. He wants to stay here, in this garden? The flames could reach him here!
"You're not staying, you could die! Why would you want to die?!"
"Didn't you want to die too?"
"What?!"
"Word has spread about the wound you were found with, and how you survived. You should have been dead by that! What happened to you?! Are you even Netherlands?!"
"I am..."
"No! You can't! My brother has died! You're not him!"
"I... I..."

I couldn't bare it anymore, Lux and Belgie doesn't see me as myself anymore, and now my disguise is broken. Vanished. Gone. There might be nothing left for me here anymore...

I have failed. As always.

Extra Chapter

The warming air of spring gently strokes through my hair as I walk down the street, going on a walk. It's been a while since I left the house, yet I just couldn't stand the atmosphere. Father said I've been acting more arrogant lately, but Lux says it's just my self-worth reappearing. He is so kind to me. Though I don't know how much of my old self I'd like to reappear. I feel so torn, like there is another person in my brain. I sigh, determined to enjoy the walk as much as I can and not take anyone's bullshit for granted. That isn't what I want. I just want to fit in and have some friends. Before I know it, my feet drag me to the German house hold. I feel anxious standing there, yet I proceed to ring the bell anyways. Oh God, what am I doing?! My flight response kicks in, yet the Weimar opens the door already.

"Netherlands? Good to see you. Been a while." *he greets me with warm eyes and rather curious, and I remain almost shocked at his response, silent. Weimar tilts his head, waiting patiently. I gather myself to remain calm, and not cry. Finally, someone with kindness! At least right now.*

"H-Hey Weimar." I stutter. The Germans glare softens.

"Germany is out right now, if you're wondering."

"I... I am not here for him."

"Hm?"

"... We aren't friends anymore."

"Really? When did that happen?"

"A few months ago..."

"Oh my, uhm, come inside! I can't let you wander around like a headless chicken." *Weimar offers very kindly and I accept before thinking. The German man leads me inside and I put my boots and coat away, entering the living room. The German Empire enjoys some coffee and Third Reich reads the news, old fashioned as I remember him to be. Since I remain there as silent as a mouse no one notices and Weimar speaks up.*

"We have a guest!~" *he hums and I gain the attention of the other males. Third Reich nods and the Empire smiles.*

"Neth! I haven't seen you in forever! A coffee?"

"Would be kind of you." *I mumble, carefully allowing myself to sit down on the couch. I feel nervous having the old foe of a third German Reich next to me, yet I swallow it and try to relax.*
"What brings you here?" *said Reich hums, eyes on the papers.*
"I don't know... you all are the only nice people there are." I admit, sighing heavily.
"Me? Nice? God, the rest must be terrible." *Reich chuckles drily, finally looking over to me. I glare back, motionless. Seeing my tired face, he turns more serious as well.*
"You weren't joking."
"I was not."

"Here is your coffee, Neth." *GE hands me a cup and I thank him before taking it. The atmosphere is a little awkward at the beginning between us, but soon Weimar, and even East joined. Well, he got back from the outside.*
"Welcome back, East." *Weimar hums as the GDR hangs his coat up.*
"Moin Dad, oh- Neth?"
"Hey..."
"What are you doing here? I thought West and you-"
"Yes, yes, I know."
"Oh... well... I'm sorry. I have never expected him to desert you like that."
"He did what?" *the empire raises his eyebrow and I cannot help but wonder, have East and West never talked to the elder ones what has been going on? I could certainly see the possibility of that. I exhale internally, glaring down into the black bean soup, which is steaming right back at me. I hear steps and see from the corner of my eyes how the boy sits down next to me. The couch is pretty full now, but I refuse to get closer to that ex-Nazi. For reasons, the anticipation in the room rises as the other Germans are now curious on what crimes the FRG had committed against his former best friends. We two were inseparable back then. Me and East look at each other and he feels to me more like a friend than ever before, yet I hesitate to spill the beans.*
"I'm not sure if it is a good idea."
"Me neither."
"Now, you have to tell us, we are all curious." *Weimar leans back in the arm chair. I bite my tongue and after swallowing heavily give East the go to give them a quick summary. The other adults listen carefully and I scan over their expressions with a decent amount of concentration.*

The German Empire has a poker face, he is calm and attentive. I am always in awe when talking to him, he is a gentle and wise man. I wish he was my Father instant of Dutch. Weimar has a similar expression, yet he seems a little more bothered by his son's story, playing with his fingers while listening as East sort of dramatizes the events a little, making me slightly uncomfortable, though I admit Germs brother is an amazing story teller. Third Reich is very different from his relatives, his emotions plastered on his face, swinging rapidly around. As East ends a silence befalls the room. One where everyone is digesting. I watch the Empire fold his hands and straighten up from his position, putting his now empty cup down. I didn't even see when he drank all of it. We look at each other and his expression is soft.
"So, you are being isolated by everyone else because of the actions in the past?"
"Y-Yes, that is what has been going on. I believe Germany tagged along due to peer pressure."
"I see."
"I understood why he did it, it hurts none the less."
"That is bullshit. West is a tag-along, yes, but now even standing up for his own best friend-" *East is getting furious again, but I stop him.*
"Relax, it is no use."
"And Indonesia is the catalyst in this?" *the Empire continuously hums. I nod, feeling the urge to defend myself. It's making me anxious being judged by them too.*
"I-I did apologize so many times and back then I took measures to help him. He doesn't need to like me or anything, but- " I speak very, very fast and get out of breath before ending the sentence. Ashamed, I stare to the ground. The pressing silence doesn't make it any better for me either.
"I have been fighting with myself too, it is like there are two different people in me." I bring out before sighing, starting to feel dizzy.

"I'm so sorry to hear that." *Weimar eventually says, and he sounds sincere. Reich next to me scoffs.*
"Pathetic that even your father has given up on you."
"Reich!" *all East, Weimar and GE hiss him shut, yet the man himself puts the papers down.*
"No, wait, you're getting me wrong. I am disappointed in Dutch. Not even I would be this cruel to my own son."
"... well I guess that is true." *East mumbles, reluctantly, seemingly not pleased to agree. The old Nazi sighs.*

"I know I am a bad person, and I really enjoy being the villain, but not to my family, damn it." *he huffs, but doesn't get further validation. The Empire shakes his head.*
"Neth I... I know your situation with Germany is complicated, but you can feel welcome to stay at our home as long as you like.
"I won't mind sharing a room in case you need it!" *East offers me with a smile, which I slightly and gratefully return, lifting the mood a little.*

"Perhaps it will be for the best if I leave home for a while. Thank you so much." I bring out before my throat closes up and my vision gets blurry. I cry a bit, but they are happy tears and everyone around is helping to comfort my sorrows. Why can it not be always like this, and not with my own family? I tremble with the thought, yet again, I am happy to momentarily have someone. After calming in the now very pleasant atmosphere I announce myself to go back to pick up some stuff from my house and get back here, East offering to help me carry, and simply accompany me, we hear keys in the front lock. I freeze immediately, knowing there is only one possible person who was previously missing. My anxiety rises in an exceptional rate as a voice starts ringing through the building.

"Paps, gramps, I'm back!" *Germany's familiar voice hums and not long after he appears in the living room, freezing at the scene as well. It must be utterly shocking for him. I see the color draining from his face to a pale red and yellow. I feel weird as his family appears now rather hostile, at least way more than before. The German Empire keeps his usual face though.*
"Good evening, West, it's good to see you."
"R-Right-" *Germs responds, although his eyes solo rest on me.*
"Where have you been? It's past 18 already."
"Ah, nothing unusual, a friend."
"But your friend is right here? He was so kind to spend some time with us." *Weimar intervenes the Empire's talk, giving the FRG more frights.*
"Well, uhm." *he stutters, unsure how to answer. He seems overwhelmed and shocked to see me. I wonder if he is mad at me? Or something else? Am I still too naïve? After so many years? Germany's brother gets off the couch and looks at me rather confident.*
"How about we get going? You stuff isn't going to get itself here by

us sitting and pondering the real questions of life." *he states in an oblivious act, making his brother flinch. I decide to play along and get up too, towering over everyone present.*
"I suppose you're right, my friend." I hum in a quiet voice and East grabs *me by the arm, dragging me with him. As we pass Germany, who still stands in the middle of the room, he pauses for a moment.*
"I'll see you later, brother!"
"And we four are going to have a talk while you two are gone..." *Reich speaks up for the first time, rather ominously. I almost feel pity for my former friend, though another voice inside my head tells me not to care, as I have East now. I feel bad about it, yet I follow his instructions and head out.*

The way stays quiet and I instruct East to wait outside whilst I gather my stuff really quick. Silently, I unlock the front door. A technique that I had learned long ago. East stays patiently as I quietly get upstairs and pack a bag pack with clothing and some personal belonging. Everything goes smooth until Belgium suddenly appears at my door.
"Neth? What are you doing?"
"AH- uh- Hey Belgie. I am leaving this house for a while."
"You are? But why?"
"Belgie, I know you love this house over your life, but it is not the same for me... I need to get away from this atmosphere." I sigh and keep *packing, letting her stand at the door frame. I feel the uncertainty radiating from her, yet I only face her as I am done. The other things I need I can acquire at the German house hold.*
"I will be going."
"It won't be forever, right?"
"Of course not, sister." I mumble softly, approaching her, and hug her *dearest. Luxembourg appears from the stairs as we make our way back down. He seems very concerned and surprised as he sees my bag. My stomach forms a knot as I read his expression.*

"There you are, Neth! Father he... he wanted to speak to you."
"I am not speaking with him." I growl lowly. *I am almost out this house and nothing is going to stop me. Nothing.*
"But Neth-"
"I'm leaving for a little while, our 'Father' can go fuck himself." I say, *immediately covering my mouth afterwards. How in the world did these words slip out my mouth?! Belgium lightly slaps herself out of it and Lux*

clears his throat.
"Then you better make a run for it, brother, Dutch is drunk and angry."
"As usual." I sigh and we three share a moment of disappointment. I carefully make my way down the stairs, avoiding all light and stay in the shadows. I only hear Dutch yell my name as I sprint out the front door. Leaving my family's property, I only then realize how much I have been shaking and sweating. East looks at me with widen eyes.
"Neth, are you okay?!"
"Yes... Yes... let us just leave." I reply and East doesn't ask more questions. Before I can even begin to recover, he takes my bag, offering to carry. In my astounded manner I don't find myself able to refuse and like that, we walk back to his home. Now it will be also my home. Reaching the German house for the second time this evening I let East go in first. We are greeted by the Empire offering us food, Germany apparently went upstairs without eating as we 'wasn't feeling too well'. I hope they didn't go too hard on him. I agree to join them for dinner and I enjoy it a lot, the atmosphere and the way everyone is treating each other reminds me of a happier past...

"Come Neth, let us set you up for the night." *East suggests after dinner and I agree. We head upstairs and inside his room, where East pulls a mattress from beneath his bed. Since it had gotten way later than expected, we opted to let it go for the day and simply sleep. I gather my belonging from y bag get allowance to use a new tooth brush in the bathroom and I go there, taking a green one. Looking in the mirror, I look at myself from different perspectives. I still look really bad: messy hair, dark bags, pale as always, yet I don't find as much dullness in my eyes. People have loved me for my eyes: a clear orange, like dark amber, that reflects the light like two diamonds. I smile a little at the success. I pull the skin under my eyes back, just to see a little more and to get a peek at some reflections. As I am busy with that, I don't notice how there is a knock, then the door opening behind me.*

Before I even begin to process what is going on, there is suddenly a pull from behind, then a hug.
"I'm so sorry..."

25| Mental South

Indonesia's POV

I am in my room, bored, looking out the window because there is nothing else to do. I see thick smoke rising from a few streets away and I am curious, but too lazy to go out and find out. I wouldn't want to disturbs the fire fighters. Some Nordics do that voluntary. Guess I'll just wait until the news spread, and they will. I exhale with a soft sigh and look at the sky's colors turning into a greenish yellow, which and orange draws at the horizon above the sea. It's so peaceful. My eyes wandering from the sinking sun to the network of streets in front of me I notice her coming back, alone. Alone? Where is *he*? I better question her about it. I arrive downstairs and open the door. As soon as she sees me, she waves coldly, yet it feels usual. She does seem a little satisfied even, peaking my curiosity instantly. Though, before I am able to ask, she hushes me with a gesture of her hand, making a quick motion to pass by. I scoff internally, rolling my eyes at her too. What's wrong now? She definitely knows I am curious! Remembering the Koreans teachings, I swallow my annoyance and trying to be polite, I greet back by tilting my head. She rests her eyes on me for a moment before going up the stairs. Only as she is gone, I exhale and shake my head. Allah, I don't understand this woman. I look back to the still open front door. Empty. Where did she leave him, at the Dutch's house? I couldn't see another option. Well, guess I am going to wait then. I close the door and turn around, making my way into the living room. Phil and Malaysia are there, doing nothing really. I've noticed Phil being really close to Mal the past few days and Mal embracing the closeness, I feel a little left out to be honest. But I suppose I still got my 'Mate', I shouldn't judge them so harshly. I plop down onto the armchair.
"Heya."
"Hey Indo!" Malay smiles while Phil only hums, having his eyes closed, his head resting on Mal's shoulder. I lean back in the comfy chair, folding my hands.

"I haven't spoken to you two much today, how are you both doing?"
"Tired." Phil mumbles and yawn.
"Been alright, nothing great or bad happened." Malay hums. I nod.
"I've heard the door opening, have they returned?" Phil questions and my glare automatically wander to the way of the front door.
"No, no. Just her. I suppose he is still at the Dutch's house."
"Oh no..."
"Hm?"
"Never mind -"
"Phil-"
"I SAID never mind." the Filipino sighs, opening his eyes to give me a warning glare. Yet, my curiosity has peaked again. It seems that he hiding a secret, he does know something, and it isn't the first time I felt this way about it!

The silence following afterwards rings in my ears and I am unsure on how to proceed. Looking around, the empty thoughts in my head only get disrupted as there are steps in the hallway again. Curious, neither the front door opened nor the stairs creaked, who could it be? Her? Not even excusing myself I get up and out the living room, stopping in the door frame to discover none other than him. I pause, not understanding what happened up to this point, yet I shove the thoughts aside and smile at him. I want to get closer to him to pull him into a hug, I'm freshly in love and I missed him already, yet I stop as I notice how heavily he is breathing and how much he is shaking. There seem to be tiny white crystals on his cheeks as well. Did he... have a break down again?! Oh no! What happened?! I rush to him as he moves his hand to wipe his tears away and I softly take his hand, holding it firmly with both my own.
"Do you want to go upstairs?"
He nods. Whispering words of comfort, I lead him upstairs and into my room, locking the door behind us. We sit on the bed and I on his lap, just to hug him better, and he embraces the hug.
"I-Indo, do yo-you hate me?" he suddenly asks.
"What? No! Why would I hate you?"
"Y-you would ha-hate me if you k-k-kn-knew- " he gasps for air between words. I remain silent, pondering on what he means.
"They h-hate me too..."
"Who?" I only manage to whisper.

"My fa-family." he brings out and the tension in the room rises.

"Your... family? Are they here?" I question, clueless. A deeps and shaky sigh determines from the taller male.
"Indo I... I'm sorry. I'm so sorry I- I just want to be normal!" he exclaims, louder than before and I stare at him with big eyes as he continues.
"I couldn't bare it, so I left. I-I hoped it could be better after all this time I-" he remains at a loss for words, confused. The man looks at him, breathing quickly, gathering himself. We keep glaring at each other until he deeply inhales.
"You have... no idea, have you?"
"I am not sure." I respond carefully and silence befalls the room. My 'Mate' bites his lips nervously, and perhaps a little annoyed at my obliviousness.
"Have you seen the smoke outside?"
"Yes, a house is burning, I hope everyone is okay over there."
"No one is."
"What?"
"I said no one is!" he gets louder again, sounding angry now. I feel myself in a state of shock, never have I seen him like that! Unable to do anything, he gently puts me on the side of the bed before standing up and walking to the window. I watch him open the curtains and then it, letting the orange light flooding the mildly dark room.
"Indonesia I... I want you to just forgive me, you'll learn soon enough about me, I suppose." he hums and al Allah he jumps out the window.
"HE!" I yell and get up, running to the open window, looking down, yet I find no one. I hastily look around the neighborhood, but nothing. Eventually my eyes rest on the smoke again. Blue light halls dimly from the area and I suppose that the Nordics must have arrived on the scene. I exhale deeply, feeling lost. What did he mean? It must be so oblivious, yet I am just stupid! I curse over myself for not knowing simple things and plop on my bed, sorrow over coming me.
What am I supposed to do now? Where did he go?
Numbed, I remain in bed, depressing thoughts and questions without answers spinning on repeat in my head, I don't even recognize how much time goes by before there is defined knowing

on the door.

"Indonesia!" someone yells, a familiar voice I'd identify with as one of my house mates. Feeling dizzy and dehydrated I sit up, blinking a few tears away that had formed in the void I had mentally fallen into. I go to the door to unlock it, yet suddenly hesitate, taking a step back, having a weird feeling in my stomach. It's mostly a mix of... of anger and fear I think, but there is something else... I can't quiet put my finger on it. It wants me to stay inside, away from others and their judgement. I don't respond to the person outside, simply standing at the door, though I feel their worry radiating through the wall.
"Indo. Are you alright in there?"
"I... leave me alone, please."
"Did something happen?"
"I don't want to talk about it."
"What about dinner?"
"Not hungry." I reply in a short and dry manner. There is a moment of silence.
"Do you want me to call South Korea?"
"What?"
"Uh, last time you seemed mentally way better after visiting them."
"I'll... I'll think about it. Maybe tomorrow."
"Ah, great! If you need something, give me a call!"
"Who am I giving a call to?"
"Philippines." Phil says and I finally am able to sort his voice out. I exhale vastly.
"Alright. Thank you. Can I have some water?"
"Of course, I'll leave it at your door."
"Thanks..."
"And please Indo, get some rest, will you?"
"Mhm..." I mumble and then Phil is off again. I stare a little longer at the door and then lay down again, unmotivated to even close the window.

The next day I felt more rested, but mentally not much better. I started to miss him and his secrets, I wanted to know which oblivious fact I had overlooked previously. I asked Phil to call South Korea, as I wanted to go to his house to sort things out. I feel sorry for Mal and Phil though, especially that I rather tell others than

them: my best friends. Maybe I'll tell them after I get my thoughts sorted. I believe it would be for the best anyways. Around noon I quietly move out the house, walking in a quick pace to the Koreans place. The house and garden have remained like the last time I've visited. I inhale and exhale before ringing the doorbell. I wait for someone to open, and South eventually does. He greets me with a comforting smile.
"Good noon, Indonesia."
"Hey South..."
"Please come inside. We have another guest if you don't mind."
"Ah? No, that is okay. Mind asking who it is?"
"It's dear Belgium. Her house had burned down yesterday. A terrible event." the Korean man coos and I suddenly feel cold, remembering what he had said yesterday. Could he be related to the fire? I walk inside the home and South leads me to the living room, where Belgium and North Korea sit. The man seems to be annoyed with Belgium relentlessly talking and I don't blame him. They notice me as South hums.
"Indonesia is here."
"Ah, Indonesia, welcome." North tilts his head and I happily sit next to him. Belgium seems more distraught though.
"Oh Indo, terrible things have happened!"
"So terrible that you have been talking nonsense, Belgium." the North Korean man grunts and Belgium scoffs.
"I'm telling you, it's true!"
"What is true?" I ask and South sighs.
"Belgium seems to have started to hallucinate since that traumatic event." he tells me and I start wonder, yet the woman on the couch simply pouts.

"I ain't lying! My father got murdered and Netherlands set the house on fire afterwards!" she almost yells and we three look at her. South puts the tablet with the tea cups on the living room table.
"Netherlands has been gone, sweetie."
"NO! I have seen him just yesterday! Wearing an off-white poncho with a blue moon and a bright orange scarf!" Belgie defends herself and I feel even colder than before. That description sounds accurate to... to him. My 'Mate'. Belgium says he is Netherlands?! Have I fallen in love with HIM?! Cold sweat runs down my body and I fall in the covers behind me. Now everything makes sense! His final

words, the hiding of his identity. How have I not realized sooner? I cannot believe it.
That is why he was asking about himself this often, he just wanted to be back... without being a scapegoat.
"Indo? You are suddenly really pale; do you feel well?" South hums, concerned, as North and Belgium continue to argue. I look at him and swallow hardly.
"No..."
"Oh dear, shall we leave the room?"
"Yes please." I mumble and afterwards softly get dragged outside. I am still nearly not done processing the shock and the realization, al Allah I can't believe I am... WAS dating Netherlands. I feel like vomiting and before South is able to ask, I rush to the bathroom, gaging. Yet nothing comes out, as I haven't eaten anything since yesterday, just stomach acid. It makes my eyes water and throat burn in an unpleasant way and the Korean rushes to my aid as I feel dizzy again.

"Indo!"
"S-She is ri-right-" I only manage to mumble.
"What?!"
"The description fits a c-certain someone I know." I huff before my brain shuts off, my vision blurring before going dark. I can't take it, I just need some rest. Just a moment.
Yet, even being unconscious, the dread finds its way into my mind. Something terrible is going to happen, I can feel it.

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"There you are, Neth!" *I hear her calling out. I have been sitting silently and lonely at my favorite spot, on the tree on the highest hill. I turn my head, unsure to be relieved to see her or not. I bite my tongue and sigh. Might as well hear her out, I have lost my chance of reintegration anyways. What is there even left to do. Although I feel my annoyance spiking and my grip on myself loosening, seems like the old me wants to have a portion of these emotions as well.*
"What do you want?"
"No need to be so cold, you know."
"Why are pretending to be so nice right now?"

"You wanted him dead, I just helped."
"No I didn't!"
"You have said that before."
"..." I shut quiet. I suppose that is the truth, yet that was a long time ago, when I was freshly wounded and unhealed. A childish move to take that as justification. I look back to the sky, yet I feel her presence remaining. I sigh.
"Yes?"
"What are we going to do now?"
"Leave, I guess. Everything is going down the drain anyways."
"Sweet."
"I wish I was as happy as you are."
"We'll find you happiness."
"..." I remain silent once more. I am not sure to believe her, as she was against my happiness with the others. In the end, she has been the one to catalyst these events and pressure me into all of this. No, this must be for her self-gain only. But do I really have a chance against her? I keep looking over the town, torn apart. I understand their perspective, the countries, I mean, but am I ready to let go just yet? It's ironic how much I care even after everything.

Or am I supposed to stop caring? Is it weak that I care? Care about them after they have treated me the way they have. I close my eyes, not coming to a conclusion, though I desperately try to remain in control of myself to not do anything stupid. This is not the time.
"I suppose we should leave, then." I exhale, jumping down the tree.
"Actually, I think we shouldn't leave just yet." *my friend answers with a smirk, clearly having evil intentions. I feel unwell thinking whatever her evil mind could come up with.*
"We are not doing anything to them."
"Come on, it'll be fun!"
"No-"
"Wouldn't you want some revenge?~"
"I'm not childish! Quit it!"
"Bummer, Neth, you always ruin the fun."
"Tch, you always make problems where they are none!"
"Excuse you?!" *we fight. The interdimensional being's eye darkens to a black, opening the second eye as well. I cross my arms, leaning against the tree, I couldn't have cared less about this anyways.*

"You always cause trouble, you 'Void Vessel', that is what you are."
"Hmpf."
"Let us just continue travelling and forget about this instance."
"..."
"It's just been a few weeks anyways."
"Fine. Tomorrow?"
"Tomorrow?"
"You should get some rest.
"..."

26| The mf end of the world

Indonesia's POV

A night and a day passed and I have been staying at North Koreas and South Koreas house the entire time, recovering from what has happened. I have neither seen... Netherlands nor her over this timespan. I still cannot believe it. Belgium voiced her concerns and disgusts multiple times and I got reminded of how much she has changed his opinion about her brother. I haven't said anything about the relationship we have had, yet I wasn't asked anyways. Would have been embarrassing to talk about anyways. I exhale as I sit on the couch, North has made some chicken. I am surprised at how good of a cook he is. I am not really hungry though.
I have spent time with the Dutch I have once beaten in the ground, because he had hurt me. And now I did all these nice things! I was so blind...
'But he did nice things for you too, did he not?'
"What in the world are you doing here again, I thought I got rid of you."
'You cannot get rid of your inner monologue.'
"Right, and you are here to guilt trip me?"
'I am just saying that you are evolving back to who you were before.'
"That's because my trust was broken."
'Well true- but-'

I shut my thoughts off and lightly shake my head. Allah, this is hurting my head. I munch down on the chicken, chewing alone in the great room. I sigh, wondering what will happen next. Not sure if anything could surprise me at this point anymore, but never say never, right? I lean into the covers, closing my eyes. Not sure if I could face him, if he shows up again.
My thoughts remain lost and spinning freely in my hollow head, in the hollow room. There is anticipation in the air, almost a dangerous tension growing, as if matter is just about to expand. It makes my back run cold and my skin tickle. I put my food aside. The Koreas are out shopping, Belgium went with them, I feel an

unexplainable sense of pressure pressing on me, bringing out some anxiety. I need someone right now, I just cannot be alone.
No.
Not thinking much about it I grab my hat, keys and shoes- running out the house. Anxiety pushes me over my natural limits, pushing the sprint back to my house. The sky is off, yellowish, almost. At the sudden realization I look up, running straight into the next lantern. I groan in pain and fall to the ground, my nose bleeding. My head hurts, I did not get knocked out, but the world spins. The sky indeed has a yellowish tint, the clouds in an uncanny round formation. The strangeness lets me pause for a moment. Rubbing my head, I slowly get up, taking my surroundings in. Everything is... just off colored. Weird. It's so empty too, where is everyone? Now slower, I continue walking, looking around as if something would attack me. The uncanniness stresses me out. Not a single bird makes a sound, nor is there wind.

Suddenly, the ground shakes and I hold onto the nearest lantern for support, bonking my head in the process again. It then stops, causing me to almost fall over again. The ground creaks and wheezes, breaking open. The pipes in the ground burst and water shoots in the air. I yelp in surprise, stepping back to take cover, yet it is too late and I receive a shower. A sudden earthquake?! The off feeling and look of everything?! That cannot be a coincidence. This can't be real it must be a dream!
Suddenly, the wind starts blowing in a strong manner and I need to grab onto the lantern again as well as my head, so neither of us would get blow away. The strange clouds in the ceiling begin to move. They move in a circular motion, reaching down into the middle of our little town. In disbelieve I watch with widen eyes, still fighting the wind trying to tear me away, I see the tornado forming a pillar in the colors of different blues and whites, contrasting the stark yellowish surroundings. It doesn't seem to move or anything, just emitting wind- they're just existing, blocking paths. Blocking the town center.
My friends are there... oh no, they are in trouble! I start running again, not just to be quick, but also because of the wind, trying to get forward in any ways possible. It's rather difficult, but I can manage.

Half way moving against the unreal seeming storm I come across my own home, Malaysia and Philippines holding their place outside at the fence.
"Mal?! Phil?! Why are you outside?!" I yell over the wind roaring with a lot of force.
"What???"
"WHY ARE YOU OUTSIDE?!"
"OH- WE'RE AFRAID THAT THE HOUSE WILL FALL IN ON ITSELF!"
"OH OKAY."
"WHERE ARE YOU GOING?!" Malay yells.
"CHECKING OUT WHAT IS HAPPENING!"
"I DON'T THINK THAT IS A GOOD IDEA!"
"I'LL BE OKAY!"
"BULLSHIT, YOU'RE NOT GOING ALONE!" Phil screams over the wind, barely auditable to me on the other side of the road.
Continuing, we three make our way forward and I eventually manage to switch sides as we come across a narrow area. Going straight over the road would be suicide with that force. We take cover behind a surprisingly stable wall and I gasp at the sudden lack of wind, totally out of breath. What exercise. We all pant for a little, just taking in a little rest. My lungs scream as I breathe and my muscles tremble.
'Exhausted already?'
"S-Shut up!"
'Alright, to be fair we were always physically weak.'
"Be quiet! Damnit!"

"Indo- where is your boyfriend? I haven't seen him since you left." Malay gasps for air.
"He- He is a traitor." I exhale shakily, both cause of emotions and my physical situation.
"Traitor?"
"He is... It is Netherlands, actually. He came back."
"WHAT?!"
"..." Phil stays suspiciously quiet; he doesn't seem nearly as surprised as everyone else receiving the information. Gettig my breathing under control again, I straighten up and eye my oh so awfully quiet country. I narrow my eyes, putting sentences together carefully.

"Phil, did you know about this?"

"No..."
"I don't believe you; you are a terrible liar."
"..."
"Yes, I did. I knew it was Netherlands." Phil sighs, looking in shame to the ground.
"Since when?!"
"Like two weeks in, I guess."
"Why didn't you tell me?!"
"I felt pity, Indo." Phil looks at me, many emotions flashing behind his eyes.
"He was afraid and anxious, he begged me to keep it a secret."
"..."
"And... she threatened me." he mumbles, adding something yet I do not understand the second part. I don't feel like asking though, it is just betrayal after betrayal.
"I can't believe you did that." I huff and the other one sighs.
"You're such a child. I thought you said you got over it."
"It's not that easy!"
"I know, I know."
"Very sorry to interrupt, but the ending of the world is far worse than Indos grief right now!" Malaysia yells, shifting the attention to him.

Before I was able to reply with a snarky remark the ground started to shake once more, making all three of us loosing balance. I go down to the ground again and simply PRAY that the wall above us will not crumble down to us. There is a loud creaking and wheezing, and suddenly the earthquake is gone again. This is the second time now! How is this even happening, we are not even near any earthquake region?! I gasp for air I didn't know I was preventing from entering my body and quickly get on my feet again, viscously looking around the wind has turned down a bit but I freeze in place as I turn to the street. Enormous cracks are working themselves through the ground in real time and you could watch them form without any timelapse. It's both very scare yet very interesting. I quickly shake my head.
'Focus on the goal!'
"YES, YES, I AM!"

Phil dares to carefully get closer to the now deep flaw in the

pavement, inspecting them for a good minute before straightening up, looking around, then turning his head around.
"Those gaps are coming from down town. Seems like they come from the pillar in the center of town." Phil says slowly, thinking loudly, looking down the street once more.
"I know we wanted to go, but are you still sure it is a good idea?" Malay seems very unsure, a little afraid even. I definitely see why, yet I almost feel being pulled into the place. I take a moment to gather myself and my thoughts.
"Yes Mal, but if you're afraid, which is totally reasonable by the way, you can go back. I just... need to go."
"TCH! Famous last words or what?!" he throws his arms in the air, angry, yet I know he is just worried and stressed. Who wouldn't? I stand there, determined but a little helpless- watching Malays face distort with various negative emotions. It reminds me of the time Malay was yelling at Netherlands. I wonder how 'genuine' the Dutch really was, and how much he acted in front of us. Oh Malay, I have wronged you. I am so sorry. Phil made a motion with his hand.
"Malaysia... we are stuck inside this town anyways- there is still the wall present, there is no way for us to get out really. We have no other choice! I... I need to talk with Neth too, if he is in there. Indo also, I presume." Phil yelled as calmly as he could in a situation like this and Mal lowers his shoulders, uncertain and hesitant. I am impressed with Phils ability to control his emotions, he seems so composed, while everything in my head is such utter chaos ...but maybe I should at least try to calm down too- panicking isn't a good option.
'Agreed, you are such a hothead anyways.'
"We are supposed to be working together, you know that right?"
'Yea, I just don't care as much.'
"Go to hell."
'Oh, we will.'

I take deep breaths- focusing, and look around. Making sure that the coat is clear we three continue on our way, Malaysia refusing to leave us despite his fears, which is just so brave of him. Going further to the center, the destruction becomes stronger, the wind hotter, branches, stones and more waste laying around and even flying through the air- the volume of the moving air of the tornados gets unbearably loud! It's all happening beneath the strangely tinted

sky.
"I think I should let you two know some things before it's too late..." Phil suddenly hums, grabbing my attention. He still carries shame in his eyes, and oh so much hurt.
"What is it?" I ask.
"Neth and her, uh... are kind of not natural."
"W-What do you mean?"
"Neth he- he possesses the ability to control fire and she... she is just a blood thirsty monster." Philippines admits and shivers run down my spine. Allah, what did he just say?! I knew something was off, but THAT?! Phil glares at my disbelieve.
"It does explain his ability to recover this fast, too. Remember?" he hums nonchalantly, looking forward to the center of the city. I remain quiet, yet not stopping in my trace.

I desperately push the thoughts, together with the again uprising panic away to not throw up the closer we get- now taking a closer look at the glowing cracks in the ground.
"So, what you're implying, I think all of this is caused by the same person, him or her or whatever." I mumble, my throat immediately hurting from the air, exercise and continued yelling. The sound of the swinging air got louder again. Phil walks next to me and I pay close attention to his words, as he knows seemingly so much about them.
"It's all magic."
"Magic?"
"Yes, I am a guy of science too, but we are dealing with... uh, interdimensional threats."
"..."
"Indo, I know damn well how weird that sounds."
"Right, go on."
"I'm not sure who it is caused by in this case, but we need to remain very careful." Phil sighs, sweat forming on his fore head. He is just as nervous as the all of us. Now also Malaysia came down a bit more, catching up to us. He breathes out, annoyed and also exhausted
"Alright, let's go down and get it over with. Isn't like anything else is gonna ha-" he starts- being interrupted by a loud crash. We turn around immediately, noticing a giant, clean cut in the building behind us. Fascinating, in comparison to everything else it is just so

clean and neat and precise! Phils face goes pale in mere seconds.
"Seek cover, now!" he yells and sprints off.
"Phil?!" I yell after him before following shortly afterwards. Slashing sounds hall through the air and the building above me crumbles down. I see my eyes flashing in front of my eyes. Then I was teared away from the spot by my friends before any rubble could hit me. We three are now in a narrow stripe between two buildings, I feel my heart beat ringing in my ears and the air is unbearable hot, almost like in a sauna.

"What was that?!" I whisper yell.
"H-Her, I believe." Phil stutters with widen eyes, seemingly reliving trauma. I wonder, yet decide it's not the time right now, Allah!
'We are so going to die.'
"No, we are not!"
'I bet the others are long dead already.'
"SHUT!"
I clench my hands on my skull, desperate to get the hopeless thoughts out of it. Not the time, not the time. I desperately suppress my fear and anxiety to stay calm, yet it is getting more difficult by the second. I am sure they are still alive. Jarring laugher halls through the inner part of the city and the wind pick on speed again, sort of creating a wall Around the inner parts.
"Come out, come out, where ever you are~" the familiar voice rings in my ears in a wryly manner, it hurts my head even more!
"I just want to make is quick, don't be such party pooper~" she hums, follows by shrieking laugher, so off tone and off putting that I can't help it but shiver. She really is out for my head. Phil silently gestures us to move forward in the security of the slim walkway between the houses, we are in the European district now I believe. The old Dutch resident shouldn't be far away... or whatever is left of it. Turning a corner, I am met with the stench of blood. At the end of the way piles a mountain of bodies, blood draining from many wounds. The mangled corpses are barely recognizable yet the sight alone makes me sick to the stomach. My legs suddenly feel weak and the shock radiates from the other two behind me as well. T-They are dead! I don't know them, but this is terrible! Horrible! What a monster! I hold myself together with all the mental strength I have, slowly pushing myself and my friends out the turn, yet the image has burned into my mind already. Ah Allah...

With no choice left be back out into the main street again, though we try to stay near the wall and out of sight, it's a terrifying walk to take, I could die at every step! Brutally murdered like... like them. As we made our way to the middle of our town, the heat got more intense and I can't help but wonder what is at the center. A fucking sun?! We came past many alive and dead countries, states and cities, hiding between building, mostly Europeans, but also others. I grow more concerned as I cannot find the Koreans brothers with them. With fear they told us to watch out for a girl in light clothing- I remember seeing someone with a light green jacket...

We walk down the main street leading to the center of the out town, in sight a terrible flaw in our judgement to do, without inconvenience, which was until we notice fast movement above us, jumping from roof to roof in absolute silence like an own and with complete precision. As if I was granted the ability of foresight or my nerves just gave way, I tear my friends to the wall again. In the quick succession we three tumble onto the cobblestone ground. Just in time to not be cut in two by another slash. I only witnessed the millisecond of what seemed to be a red lighting strike hitting the ground. That was way too close. I breathe quickly as the adrenaline rushes to my aid, giving me the strength, I need to keep going. Getting up, while remaining close to the wall there is complete silence around us. Dangerous. Anticipating. Tension lays in the air, seeping into every fiber of my body, into every crack in the stones of the building. The wind is gone.
Suddenly, there is a sound. A clear 'thump' halls through the empty and now quiet street, chilling me into my bones. She is behind us. Do I even dare to turn around?
I swallow heavily as I do.

And there she is, the devil himself.

Her.

27| Cracking

Indonesia's POV

With my body half turned, I stare her down. Well, actually, she stares me down more than I do it with her, but that is not the point. Oh dear, this is so unbelievingly bad. Terrible, horrible! Horrendous!
"Wh-" I only manage to bring out, the fear paralyzing me. As soon as I had started stuttering, the fast I stopped, as she lifted her head to look at me, almost as if forcing me to look right into her face. Into the real her. Shock runs through me like a lightening and I almost forget how to breathe at the sight.

Her face is disfigured into a distorted with pitch black eyes, mouth, goopy tears and uneven twitching, something straight out of one of these analogue horror series on the internet. There is a dim, red glow shining from the inside of her, as if she was hollow. A mere shell of everything that exists around her. Truly, a terrifying sight. Looking back at me, she lets out a shrieking laugher once more, making fun of me and fun of the situation we are in. Her eye sockets and mouth distort further, painting most of her face in a dark black. The loss of the identity tied to the being makes me panic, as she turns completely black, that faint glow remaining, the distorted features replaced with sharp, red eyes and a grin. Her weapon of choice is equality as boiling of a red, it seems as if she could barely contain her excitement about all of this! T-THAT'S CREEPY AS HELL. I look around quickly to determine any route of escape.
"Just try to hide, I'll always find you, Indonesia."
"Sh-Shut up! Stop that!" I yell at her, just to earn another laugh. Her eyes shift to Phil, who is standing a little bit behind me.
"And you have outgrown your usefulness, there is nothing left for you, you prick." the monster exclaims, reaching back with the knife in her hand, throwing it not much later directly at him. We three yelp in surprise collectively as a group at the attack, the knife

ramming into Phil's shoulder, pinning him against the wall. Phil gasps, a stuttered scream emitting from his lips. I remain frozen as the black thing closes the distance rapidly, ramming what used to be their leg deeply and forcefully into his stomach, causing my friend to spit up blood, breathing stertorous in the process. An awful sight to witness. Before I can even do anything further, she takes the knife out of his shoulder, slicing it open in the process, earing a blood curling scream from my friend. Despite the power disadvantage Phil narrowly dodges the knife being ramped into his face by turning his head away, yet he is not as lucky as the blade still hits his ear, slicing it off cleanly. Phil continues screaming and wheezing in pain, trying to free himself, yet he is too weak to do it. The cruel laugher is ringing in my ears.

I myself suddenly snap out of the trance I was in.
"Leave him alone!" I yell and move forward in attempt to push her out the way. I don't really succeed either, yet the black mass of matter shifts her... more like their attention to me. With a single push from that outer worldly being I am thrown back a few meters, stumbling backwards over the cobblestone onto the ground.
"**Oh! I'll enjoy finally getting rid of you, you little pest!**" the monster screams in delight, moving to me in a single swift motion, raising the weapon high above their head. I fail to shuffle out the way and shut my eyes close, not ready for the impact. The air buzzes and impact are heard, together with a shriek, following by the sound of prospecting over the cobblestone, as if something stops rapidly after acquiring immense speed.

Also, it feels like I am not dead yet.

Really, REALLY carefully, I open my eyes once more, freezing again, as a familiar yellowish poncho flaps in the wind, combined with the iconic orange scarf. Vastly eyeing my surroundings, I notice the monster sliding down a wall at the end of the street. Wow! What the hell?! I look up, seeing Netherlands. He hasn't even bothered to hide his identity anymore. His face seems full of grief, anger and an unending sadness, yet it also radiates calmness. Suddenly, his expression hardens. He reaches back, and I watch a fire igniting in his hands. My blood goes cold seeing what Phil had previously said turns out to be true. No way. Neth flings the ball

with incredible speed at the monster, exploding half the house in the meantime. He evaluates the situation, then rushes to Phil, who had slid down the wall, completely exhausted, bleeding badly.
"Phil! Hang in there!" he stammers, pushing the hair out his face.
"Neth... I'm not going to die, really."
"But your ear!"
"I'll- I'll survive. Go and make sure 'she' doesn't claim other people's lives." Phil wheezes with dry throat and Neth proceeds to gently lay him in Malays arms, giving him quick instruction on where to hide and how to aid Phil, if he'd find a first aid kit.
"NETHERLANDS!" the monster screeches in a deafening tone, dashing to attack him. Black matter is evaporating from their body, making them seem more like a ghost than a person. Neth takes steps back and away from me, to draw the attention furthermore to him, and he dodges the dash, sending another fireball after them. The fireball misses, crashing into another building. Catching my breath, I shuffle back against the wall of the building behind me, watching them fight, trading blows. Netherlands' movement is swift and well calculated, yet firm and strong, I stare in awe how dodges and counters the attacks in such an unnatural manner while keeping himself collected. The monster meanwhile is the complete opposite of him, moving almost unpredictable and rapidly, as if fighting without any strategy. Yet, Neth remaining mostly defensive tells me just how much power imbalance there is between them. This 'thing' is much more powerful! How brave of him- but why would he want to stop her? It's not like he has any reason for it...
I suddenly feel very bad for my actions and remain silent. The fight keeps on going in a fast pace with little contact between them, at least I find it hard to follow. After handing a good, flaming fist into the abyss that has the beast become, it screeches, moving back, closer to the middle of the city. Neth proceeds to move after them, to give them as little time to recover as possible.

"Netherlands!" I now yell his name too and he stops for a moment, yet he hasn't turned around, simply standing there, tall and majestic. The is quiet for a moment.
"I'm so sorry! Please go and hide, will you? She... will loose interest in you soon."
"Neth- I-"
"And then we'll be gone. I should have gone way sooner anyways. A fool

I was."
"..."
"Don't follow me, Indo."
"..."

Like that, he is gone. Vanished into the center of the town, the catalyst behind this natural disaster. I feel all sorts of emotion, he is so much more mature than I remember him. I stay on the ground, simply gathering my breath, exhausted. My mind is spinning with all sorts of thought. I need to follow him.
'Yes. But why?'
"I don't know."
'Fair.'

I get up and run further into the city, almost collapsing multiple times during the trying process. My legs are still shaking and my lung is screaming for a break, the stitching in my sides torturing me along the walk. Breathing heavily, I slowly enter the confinement of the inner town. The buildings are crumbling and the sky is even more yellow, the trees show either deep cuts, or are completely off anyways. It is pure destruction. Dead birds litter the street and the roaring of the wind intensifies once again, as if trying to push me out. Glaring into a space between two houses I get scared by another corpse. It is so close that I jump back as the stench of flesh and blood hits my mouth and nose. Not being able to control myself anymore, I bend over and throw up, vomiting in waves the half-digested chicken from lunch. My throat burns more intense and my eyes water from the procedure, all in all, I feel horrible and even a little dizzy. Coughing, I search for stability at the wall, trying desperately to get myself under control again, the tears streaming down my face. I feel as if giving up, there is really nothing I can do. I feel the urge to cry, to give up and accept my fate, yet an unknown force inside me commands to keep on going.
I don't know what it is or why, yet I continue walking, even slower than before, continuously gasping for air. I hope Malay and Phil are doing okay. There is a cracking sound above me, then debris raining onto me and I barely manage to jump out the way before heavy bricks clash and shatter on the ground next to me. The clash halls through the street and is carried away by the wind. Otherwise it is rather silent. Too silent. Having a sudden spike of anxiety I

enter a shadowy street, just to be confirmed and hearing the shrieking laugher again, followed by the sound of impact. I keep moving, pressing one of my hands on my mouth to stay as quiet as possible. Though, I do feel a tiny bit safe being hidden between the buildings than I would on open street. The trail ends at the street around the small park in the middle of town and with horror I watch something which seems to be a black hole, from with the tornado seems to be emitting from. Truly, a bizarre sight. The yellow sky at barely 2pm, the clouds wandering around the stable, yet viciously moving, roaring, tornado with the totally out of place crack of seemingly dimension. I feel weak, small and definitely overwhelmed, running into the danger of hyperventilating. I never thought something like this could be reality, and I pray to my God to watch over me and my friends for them to return to safety. I even pray for Netherlands well-being. Without him I would have been dead...

I force myself to breathe slower, my pulse pounding heavily in my head, making everything incredibly difficult. I almost scream as the wall next to me is heavily impacted and I spot the monster on a lantern not to far away. Immediately I scout backwards, afraid for my life. The cackling burst out intro screeches in an unknown language, it does continue to sound off tune and just wrong. The creature smiles, jumping off and away. I feel both relieved that they are gone, yet also very scared that they will find my friends or such. I pray again that they have found a good enough hiding spot to wait their rage out. To wait out the killing spree.
Despite all my fears, the curiosity overtakes me after what feels like forever of nothing happening. Though I assume that only a minute or so passed since then. Shuffling closer to the edge again, I carefully peak around the corner, blinded by the unnatural, yellowish light. I hear grunting beside me and almost stumble over my own feet turning my head rapidly. I spot the Dutch himself at the wall breathing heavily, seemingly stretching burning muscles. Checking around once more, I rush as fast as I can to him.
"N-Neth!" I kneel down next to him, throwing my anger against him out the window. I grab onto his arm as he tilts his head. Upon seeing me, his expression falls flat.
"Indo?! What are you doing here?! I told you to stay behind!"
"I... I couldn't."

"Why? It's dangerous!" he coos with a sharp tongue and I feel touched by the amount of caring he still feels over me. Even after I have repeatedly treated him like shit.
"I don't know! I... I did not want to leave you alone in here."
"..." he remains silent, forcing himself to stop leaning against the wall. I shuffle back, surprised, taking my hands back.

"You're an idiot for risking your own life over someone like me." Neth sighs and stands up again, continuing to stretch. I remain on the ground, watching with wide eyes. As he glares back eventually, I advert my gaze, biting my tongue. If I could only diverge the topic-
"W-What is going on here?"
"I never wanted this to happen. I just wanted to leave as quietly as I came."
"Eh?!"
"She did that." he points to the thing I assumed to be a black hole.
"This leads into the multiverse."
"MULTIVERSE?!"
"I know, I know. It sounds unbelievable!" Neth pouts, putting his hands up in defense. It doesn't seem like he is lying though, Allah, why should he?!
"Okay... go on." I slowly nod, allowing him to elaborate.
"I don't have the time to explain this all to you- but I was in there the past years. Now she wants to use it to consume the world here and destroy it."
"A-And she is using you as excuse to do this?!"
"I believe so." he admits, shame swinging with his voice. I look to the... 'dimensional crack', I guess, trying the process the information. It sounds like a thing from the movies or books, but this is real life, right? I grab my head; it is pounding heavily inside my skulls. Allah. We remain silent next to each other for a moment. Neth inhales again, but I stop him.
"No need to apologize again, I understand. None of what you ever did was in your control. It took me way to long to realize." I fall into his not even formed sentence. Neth holds the air in for a while, just breathing out afterwards.
"I still feel bad..." he mumbles and I nod. I clench my teeth and force myself onto my feet again, even though they were enjoying the break. I huff and puff, struggling to stand properly. I feel Neth's urge to aid me, yet he hesitates coming closer, for oblivious reasons.

"It's... It's okay." I sigh and he proceeds to softly hold onto my shoulders. I can't help it and get a little flustered at his warm hands yet both our expressions remain neutral, the emotional situation just too complicated and awkward between us.

Suddenly, Netherlands lifts me up at top speed,holding me, and before I can question him, he jumps off far into the air with apotent jump, just before there is this familiar, red lighting slash into theground where we previously stood. As we are far into the air now, I just grabonto his coat, afraid to fall. Yet his grip around me is strong and the landing doesn't nearly feel as strong as I could have imagined. Yet, the movementdoesn't stop, as Neth seemingly starts to dodge again, this time with me in his clutches. I mostly keep my eyes shut, praying, but as I dare opening them thebeast is right in front of us and WAY to close for comfort. My life flashes infront of my eyes as Neth suddenly switches motions and kicks back, hitting ahole in the monster's body. We land on the ground as the Dutch starts sprintingagain, now towards the black crack occupying space. I panic, looking at it withwiden eyes. Neth dashes and yells.
"CATCH US IF YOU CAN!" before we twodisappearinto the 'Multiverse'.

28| Last Moment Outside

Exiting the world felt like a breeze, like when you open a window in the morning. It all went from chaos... to nothing. Like the click of a button, the wind stopped its roaring, no sounds of houses crumbling or distorted screeks by an unworldly creature. Silence surrounded them. Nothing surrounded them. A nothingness that couldn't be found on earth. Indonesia felt like this is what space would be like. His heart beating rapidly in his chest he looked around with big eyes, unsure if his experience was real or a dream. Was Netherlands even Netherlands, or was the memory just haunting him? He got to a point where he stopped hating the man, yet he was just so in shock and confusion about everything surreal happening.
It must have been a dream this far, right?
A nightmare.
Indo though did not care at the possibility of what reality he was in. Important was to the man to stay with Netherlands and not die. Should be simple, right? They were surrounded by thousands of thousands of lights scattered like stars. They are not stars though, but white glowing bubbles containing worlds. Netherlands stood on seemingly nothing, running continuously through the void. When Indo dared to look back, his own world itself was also nothing more than a glowing bubble, it was horrifying and fascinating to him at the same time. The bubbles around seemed to be barely bigger than his first, making him question how an entire world could fit within such a singularity. He didn't even mind being carried around by the Netherlands as he glared in awe at the vast, black nothingness around them. He remained in the trance, taking the surroundings in further. It wasn't hot, it wasn't cold; no wind, yet also not fuggy. Netherlands's hasty running soon slowed to a rhythmic trot, until he eventually stopped, breathing heavily, trying to recover some of his wounds before the second round. He just stood there, as if anticipating.
He knew that from now on it would only get harder.
"Indo?" he hums, catching his breath.
"Yes?" Indo couldn't bring out more than a quiet whisper, he didn't

dare to yell or make loud noises in the presence of the void he was in. It was just so... majestic to him.
"*Can you hold onto my back?"*
"Eh?"
"Like a piggyback ride. Do you have the strength to hold on?"
"I- I don't know."
"..." Netherlands remained silent as well, thinking critically about his options, painting himself millions of possibilities that could play out within the next few minutes- it wouldn't stay quiet for long. Yet, there wasn't time to overthink it.
"We'll try, then." the tall Dutch determines and throws the smaller male in the air, catching him on his back. Indo yelped at the sudden move, feeling his muscles ache and burn when he held onto Netherlands in this now different position, who simply stared back at the bubble that they came from. Silent, awaiting, nervous, brave, ready.
"Indo, if you survive this, I'll grant you a wish. I swear."
"O-Okay." Indonesia tried holding onto the other with all his might, not wanting to die, but also already having in the back of his mind what he would wish for.

There was another moment of silence, yet suddenly, the bubble that was their home started glowing brighter, expanding even. Neth already started moving before the being he had called 'Void Vessel' before emerged from the world, quickly pacing over to them with a thrilled screech. Indonesia closed his eyes, putting all his faith into Netherlands. A thing he'd never thought he would do. Yet, Netherland will protect him, he was sure of it. He trusted the man with their lives. It was a miracle to Indo how the Dutch was still able to care about him and the others, he just had to find out more about him and his story. He was finally ready to open up and listen. If they survived, that was.

Netherlands was fast at picking up the same pace the monster was dashing at them. The unmoving air they were now reacting in felt like knives on the skin, trying to tear one away with the pace they were exhilarating. Netherlands, having way move freedom at this moment in space and time to do more elaborated maneuvers, attacks, his blows now less held back and stronger, more aggressive, now that he didn't have anything in the way. The magic used,

which he originally acquired from the being he was fighting, could do wonders this instance. Keeping the distance, as the man preferred firing at range, started throwing fire balls, one bigger than the others, rays and defending walls at incoming attacks. Yet didn't move too complicated though, due to Indonesia desperately clinging onto him. Elaborated moves could hurt or even break Indos back, something he doesn't want. With the new opportunities, yet also the few limitations remaining, the fight didn't go easy at all. The monster, more experienced than Neth, was able to slash through the fire at times, and Neth's energy was continuously draining, especially since he had to be mindful of the country on his back. The clashes and slashes continue, each getting a hit off the other once in a while, though the Dutch man started feeling rather exhausted soon, he hadn't really recovered in the short time he had spent home and the monster, his former companion, was almost some sort of God. Like shootings stars did they move through the dark void in rapid and unpredictable patterns, other worlds shaking and moving out the way, as if they were conscious of their fates and inhabitants. Indonesia felt like he was on the worst ride of a roller coaster of his life, all his insides clenching up and together, he didn't manage to bare a single thought other than the urgency to hold on and not slip away. It was terrible, his body and mind yelling at him equally, yet he didn't have the nerve to cry, neither the oxygen. With a mighty swing, just like the first blow Nether hit, the foe was sent back a good amount, giving both mere seconds and breathe. Indo gasped while Nether kept his breathing quick and flat, to prevent his sides stitching.

"Indo, I have an idea! I'll need to drop you back in though."
"W-What?!"
"I'm going to close the portal, then you all will be safe!"
"What about you?!"
"I'm at fault, what happens to me isn't important!"
"WHAT?! Yes, it is!"
"Indo, we don't have time to discuss-" Neth yelled almost desperately as their conversation was cut short with the monster slashing at him once more, having reached them from the distance again. They were becoming more aggressive, the hits heavier and movements faster. At least that was how their opponent felt like, or maybe Neth was just tired. Either way, this couldn't go on much longer, or they

both would die.

"We need to do this!" Neth yelled during his attempts of defending them.
"NO!" Indo determined. Now that he had had the chance to finally know this guy he falsely hated for years over years, he didn't want them to be separated this soon. Nether felt very different about the situation. He wanted them to be safe, there was only one way. He only knew one was to discard of what used to be his friend, and only because they accidentally spilled the beans many, many years ago. To understand his reasoning, one must understand the void as an organism themselves, allow me to explain, dear reader: The void is the large, three-dimensional emptiness, where everything exists at once and never does. The void is like space, seemingly infinite with infinite worlds, floating in the safety of nothingness, separated from each other very politely. Yet, deep down, the void has an elevated concentration of itself, so dense that it resembles liquid, almost. Beings like Netherlands' friend are 'born', or formed from there, freely able to travel around the void and worlds. Some of them are good willed, others are not. The only way to effectively get rid of them, is to return them to their birthplace, where they'll dissolve due to the concentration. Neth knows that.
He also knows that he will not come back. The void will consume him too.
But it is worth for him to bring such sacrifice.
For the world he lived in.
For other worlds he had visited.
For his family.
For everyone he had let down.
Him.

A journey it has been. Long 70 years. He was tired. Tired of everyone, even if he loved his people so much. He was tired of 'Her', and how controlling she was over him.
He just wanted to be free,
He just wanted to be happy.

So, despite Indonesia's protest, or as much as he did or could in his current state, Netherlands didn't have much trouble getting him off his back once more. Dodging another slash, he forced a sad smile

over his lips. He was ready to do it, yet he needed to say good bye. Despite the pain and suffering, Indonesia had remained sort of a beam of light to him, and he had fallen in love with the guy despite the oblivious flaws in their relationships over time. It adds to the urge to protect him, even if it makes the tall male sad into the deepest parts of his soul. During the moment, the monster hit his shoulder, making a deep cut in it. Together with the emotions he was feeling, thick tears rolled down the giant's cheeks. He hugs the Asian country tightly one last time, kissing him on the forehead gently.

"Love you, Indo. Take care and think of me, alright?" Neth hummed with a smile before pushing the yelling man through the bubble, back into his world. His home. Oh, how he'd miss it. Exhaling shakily, he took steps back, making no further attempt to get out of the monsters' way. Instant, he braced himself for impact, it didn't take long for that to happen, really. He took the stab in the stomach, tensing all muscles, closing his arms around the being before it could slice him into two, or more. Drained, he decidedly used the remaining strength in his body to hold on, disregarding the magic around him. Without the magic, the halt he had on the void slipped, both falling into the darkness down below. Soon, no worlds were flashing by them as the blackness engulfs them and Neth cannot help himself but the smile at his fate. He hoped that all he ever met would move on with their life, for all the pain he had experienced and also all the pain he had given to others. They fell faster and faster, the monster shrieking in all octaves, desperately trying to wiggle themselves out of Neth's grab, knowing what was about to happen, yet it was inevitable. After a fall that felt like forever yet so short, Neth and the monster landed in the so called 'birthplace'. The raw concentration on the void's energy paralyzed Nether immediately, making him blind to the point his head was spinning, taking his breath away. Only when the creature in his arms had desegrated he happily accepted death, greeting the void like an old friend.

Extra Chapter

I feel a tight hug from behind, definitely from someone smaller than me. Taking a look in the mirror confirm my suspicions. Germany. I value my options in this situation, and decide to let him stand his ground. I sigh softly and carefully turn around, closing the door and locking it before taking a look at the small German in front of me. Well, 'small' is an overstatement, the guy is around 1,80m, but I am still taller. He looks at me with a pained expression and wide eyes, and I am not sure what made him react like this. Maybe his family? Or is it his own feelings after all? Guess I will find out soon. I stroke his black hair and he sighs, wiping upcoming tears away. I feel bad for him, it's not like I've valued him in the past, yet the betrayal makes me more careful this time around. I carefully take off his glasses, putting them on the shelf above the sink, seating him and me down on the corner of the bath tub. I can see that Germany is holding his absolute best to hold himself together.
"I-I'm sorry. I-I knew it was wrong." *he brings out, having difficulties. Though his motions tell me that he'll most likely continue, so I stay quiet, watching his every move in the mirror to determine how sincere he actually is. Germs breathes in heavily.*
"I was so stupid, letting Polen convince me of things like this. I... I actually have broken up with him."
"You WHAT?!" I almost shout, composing myself quickly. I never thought he'd go that far. Germany looks at me.
"There is nothing I can do to show that I am aware of making a grave mistake, you'll never see me as a loyal friend again. Or a friend, even. That was the least I could do." *he speaks shakingly and I remain silent once more. Germany makes a rotation motion with his hand as if trying to keep himself going.*
"They... they gossiped a lot about you and always wanted me to talk about you, I didn't say much, especially about your home life, it all just felt so wrong. I'm so sorry." *he continues, looking me straight in the eyes, they show grief and hurt, yet shining in truthful sincerely. His words are hurting me too. A part of me is describing him as a helpless idiot who cannot decide what side he is one, yet I also feel happy that in the end, he has chosen me. I fold my arms open and pull him into a hug,*

which he returns.

"I won't ask you to be friends right now, I want to earn that title again." *the German hums softly after a little and I smile at the fact he is so careful with my feelings. He did learn. I exhale, near the tears as well. Looking back at him again, I cannot help but smile.*
"I missed you too, Germs." I whisper and the other male smiles in return.
"I accept you as my friend again." I say and see his eyes light up in delight. After drying our tears and laughing together, still a little awkward but much more comfortable already we step out the bathroom, almost stumbling over East Germany. He seems confused.
"What were the both of you in there?"
"I admitted my mistake." *Germany says, his voice filled with shame.*
"And I accepted the apology." I hum, laying an arm around my friend. East narrows his eyes before seeming relieved.
"Oh, good. I suppose we should go to bed."
"Can I join you?"
"Uh, Sure!"

Not long after, me and the German brothers are all in East's room talking while sitting in bed. The atmosphere is good, and Germs shares with us what happen during his period of 'being an asshole'. He talks about the other countries and what has been going on, how Poland 'seduced' him, making East laugh out loud at the fact that his brother is indeed gay, making the other furious. I laugh along and spend a good evening together. Why can it not always be like that? So peaceful, everyone respecting each other.

During the night, I find myself unable to sleep. It doesn't help that the moon decides to shine directly into my face either. I exhale softly, trying to fall asleep to the regular breathing the others are doing. We three are sleeping in the same room right now, mind you. I sit up on my mattress, looking out the window. An orange tinted, full moon shines down at me and I hum annoyed at it, blaming it for my sleepless night. The window had remained half open, East strongly believes into 'Lüften' or whatever. The night seems soft tonight, a calm breeze caressing the leaves outside, which are already changing its colors slowly. It is September, after all. I get the sudden urge to go outside, just to admire the beauty of the night, and then decide to do so. I ain't going anywhere tomorrow, so sleeping into the day wouldn't hurt, right? I carefully get up and get dressed as

quietly between the other two as I can before leaving the room. I smile at them one last time before sneaking down the stairs, and getting outside. I know where their spare key is hidden, so no need to take one from the inside.

The night is warm, and I feel calm walking down the street. The only present light is the moon, as the lanterns are turned off already. I hum to myself, feeling like wanting to visit my favorite spot. It should be empty at this time of night, no? Leaving the town and walking up the enlightened pathway to the top of the hills, the wind picks up and it gets colder, I shiver a bit. The sudden coldness of nature causes me to drift back into a dark piece of my mind. I suddenly feel lonely and cold, it is as if the moon in putting my suffering into the spotlight and the feelings worsening. Half way I look down into the town, feeling very little appreciation for them.
No one would miss me if I would be gone, right?
Sure, they are the Germanies... but is it worth that?
I hate being treated like trash.
There are no signs of stopping and-

I rapidly shake my head and breathe in deeply, trying not to tear up. Stupid moon. Against the dull feeling in my stomach, I press on to the top of the hill. Yet... I find someone there already. Curious? The figure seems unknown to me. The moon light paints the person very well, and it doesn't take long to realize that it isn't a human... but something else. It notices me, particles emitting from its body, evaporating into the air.
"Who-" I call out, just to be met with a glare that sends shivers down my spine. I duck my head, afraid of their presence.
"U-Uh- sorry- I-" I stutter, stumbling backwards, attempting to leave.
They seem to turn around, tilting their head.
"ien hecsmn? hens, asw nd det?"
"Huh?"
"Eh? asw op??"
"..." I remain quiet, not understanding a single word they are using.
"Sorry, I don't u-understand." I call out.
"I only speak English and Dutch." I add, hopping that the duality of language will give me an advantage.
"hagh mamtdver. English? I do that. Not well, but speak I do."
they answer in broken, but understandable English and I exhale a bit, curious, but also afraid to ask. Their eyes pierce me, giving me an

uneven feeling.
"Who is you?"
"U-Uh- Netherlands. I am the Netherlands."
"You are Country? But Person?"
"I... Indeed, yes. It is called a Countryhuman."
"And there?" they motion to the tow below.
"... they are mean people."
"Mean person?"
"Many of them. They hate me."
"Why?"
"A lot has happened... they give me all the fault."
"Is true?"
"NO- I- I mean not all."
"Then why you here?"
"I can't leave, there is a wall preventing me."
"You want leave?"
"... well-"
"I help." *the being grins sinister and they change their shape in the moonlight to resemble more of a human. They end up with a smaller shape, a green jacket, silky white skin with terrible scars, red eyes and brown hair. They grin and extent a hand.*

"I change you. Good?"
"Change me? How?" I look at their extended hand, hesitant yet intrigued.
"Give Power. Learn Fight. Explore worlds." *they hum in a more feminine voice and I am very tempted. Tempted to leave everything behind. The things I would do for a fresh start.*
"What... What do you want in return?"
"You teach English me. Stay loyal."
"That is all?"
"Yes."

I don't see why I should choose to not go.
It'll be better for me I believe. The offer is so tempting. Or am I just selling my soul to the devil? Either way... this offer is just so good. I give in and hesitantly extant my hand to shake theirs... or hers.
"Ah- uh- What is your name?"
"Name is Liana, Liana."
"Liana..." I murmur, taking her hand. Suddenly there is pain in my body

and my legs give way, just before I pass out, I hear yelling in the distance. Someone yelling my name.

Everything goes black. A new life starts for me.
A good one, I hope.

Final Chapter

Indonesia's POV

I land rather roughly out the 'interdimensional crack' on the paved floor, just to find out that everything has returned to normal, well, minus the destroyed building and... and corpses... That is so sad. I hate seeing deaths. Though I feel too drained to even get up, so I remain there, panting- shaking, with a closed throat. I feel dizzy and my head hurts processing what happened, my legs and arms feel as if they would fall off and I barely keep myself together. I feel numb from the unreal events that have happened, glaring at the crack in the air before me. Neth said he would close it... yet it is still open.
Wait...
"N-Neth-" I shakily say his name, remembering the gentle gesture he had before throwing me back in. My vision blurs, knowing I'll probably never see him again. This is all my fault. If I wouldn't have been so stupid and faced what I feared about him beforehand... If I only would have been more supportive! I punch the ground beside me in grief and frustration, my vision blurring, and I start to cry. My emotions flow out of me, all the fear and anxiety I carried through the entire event that have built up, together with the loss of... a love. I did love this man. I fail to inhale nor exhale properly, grabbing onto my head. It hasn't been often that I felt this lost, yet the feeling never gets duller, it doesn't matter how often you experience it.

"Indo!" I hear a familiar voice yell in the distance yet I don't turn my head. I only realize that it is Philippines as he reaches me. There is a big tourniquet on the part of his head where his left ear used to be. Right, the monster. I look to him with big eyes.
"P-Phil he-he's dea-dead-" I cry and Phils expressions falls, he takes me into a great hug.
"I'm so sorry, Indo. I'm glad he protected you."
"H-He should have pro-protected himself!" I exclaim while the tears stream down my face and into Phils dried, bloody T-Shirt. He leans

back, letting me sit between his legs, letting me cry, caressing my hair. His voice is soft and caring as he speaks.
"So, you did see him as an ally in the end, I assume?"
"He- He saved me from d-dying multiple times..." I weep and Phil exhales. More surviving countries arrive at the scene, gasping at the crack in our reality. I don't care for them; all I care is that I lost him.
"Idiot- I- I was just starting to lo- love him." I burry my head into Phils chest with all the sorrow in the world and he remains silent. I have no idea how much time passes or what the others think about my situation, yet if I would start being truthful, they'd throw me in a mental asylum, I am sure of it. I sigh heavily as America fidgets some tissues, he had with him out his pocket, ready for my use. I do use them, yes, yet I still rest my head against Phil, numb from the overwhelming experience. Never had I been afraid of dying like today.

My gaze wanders from my concerned friends to the fountain, previously where the tornado emitted, where the crack is. Nothing happens for a while, and just as the European Union orders the remaining countries to start cleaning up, the air begins ringing, wind intensifying, emitting from the crack, as if it would yell at us to pay attention to it. Slowly, the crack grows, scaring the mass, myself and Phil included. Yet, I do not feel inclined to back away. I have seen what lays beyond and how fascinating it was. I don't have the strength to reach out, though. Suddenly, a shadowy figure appears from the crack, similar to the monster that attacked us. Immediately my pulse spikes in horror. Did... Did Neth's plan not work?! He promised he would safe us! I swallow heavily as the creature looks around. Its presence is unnerving, yet it does not seem aggressive at all, maybe a trick.

The figure floats through the crack into our world, our... universe, I guess. It floats there for a moment, looking around until its eyes rest on me, looking intently, as if valuing the surroundings. They then nod, reaching back into the crack, just to slowly tear out a figure... a... familiar figure. I rip my eyes wide open, my jaw dropping.
"NETH!" I yell as the creature carefully put the unconscious man on the ground. He is pale, seemingly lifeless, yet with closer inspection the rise and fall of his chest is noticeable. Surprised gasps and

whispers go around the mass and Phil holds me back from rushing to him.
"PHIL-"
"Shh..." Phil hushes me as the being bows.

"The Void accepted his sacrifice."
"The Void was delighted by the distraught of the misshaped Vessel."
"The Void decided to spare this being of Consumption."
"The Void is very grateful."
"The Void hopes to meet him again."
"The Void will patiently await his arrival, for the Void has strengthened him."

The shadowy figure then evaporates, the dusk moving back into the crack, closing it as it does, until nothing remains. There is a silence between all that heard the creature speaking about the Void and its ways. Does that mean Netherlands is a hero? He did save us from that 'misshaped Vessel' or whatever. I now finally make my ways over to Nether. He isn't responsive, but breathing. I shift around, putting his head on my lap, playing with his hair.
"I love you too, Idiot." I hum with a small smile, tears already forming in my eyes again.

A few of my friends now dare to come closer, beginning to ask about Netherlands, even beginning to shout. I knew I stirred them up at the beginning, but just now I see myself how bad it actually is:
"He destroyed our houses!"
"What kind of monster is he?!"
"I knew that guy was off, of course it had to be him."
"He is dressed so weirdly."
and more. Many more.
Philippines stays silent, he seems nervous. Malay too, rather awkward. Then, Luxembourg makes his way through the mass, Belgium and the Koreans following close behind. Lux rushes to me, kneeling down in front of us two, observing his brother. He is first tense, then very relieved.
"Belgie, this is our fault, if we were more considerate it wouldn't have happened."

"... I... I guess. I was so scared."
"Me too, me too." the siblings sigh collectively as the Koreans scold the mass over the events and to be a little more respectful. I remove my attention from the mass and focus on him again, simply stroking his face, wishing for him to wake up.

After a little while his breathing gets a little uneven and he does indeed open his eyes, being blinded immediately. Afterwards, confused, orange eyes glare at me. I fall into a state of awe looking into his crystal-like orange eyes, appreciating them for the first time. I carefully put my hand on his cheek, smiling a little.
"Is... Is that you?" he speaks quietly, his voice sounds raspy and Belgium runs off immediately to get something to drink. I suppose we got a fountain nearby but hell what do I know is in that water.

"What happened?" Netherlands question, not making any attempt at getting up.
"Later, I- I'm just glad you are alive and well."
"R- Really?"
"Yes, you have to grant me a wish, after all." I smile. Nether scoffs weakly, rolling his eyes, but ending up smiling too, even if weakly.
"Well alright, I promised. What do you want?"

"I want to be with you, and know you. I have realized I love you for you actions and who you are, the real you."

The End, kinda. Might write a sequel some day.